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THE

WRITINGS OF DOUGLAS William JERROLD.

COLLECTED EDITION.

VOLUME VIII.—COMEDIES AND DRAMAS.

THE RENT DAY,

NELL GWYNNE; OR, THE PROLOGUE,

THE HOUSEKEEPER,

THE WEDDING GOWN,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS,

DOVES IN A CAGE,

THE PAINTER OF GHENT,

AND

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN; OR, "ALL IN THE DOWNS."

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COMEDIES AND DRAMAS.

73763

BY

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.
1854.

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LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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THE RENT DAY.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Grantley	MR. BRINDAL.
Old Crumbs	MR. YOUNGE.
Martin Heywood	MR. WALLACK.
Toby Heywood	MR. COOPER.
Bullfrog	MR. HARLEY.
Silver Jack	MR. H. WALLACK.
Hyssop	MR. BEDFORD.
Beanstalk	MR. HUGHES.
Stephen	MR. SALTER.
Farmer	MR. C. JONES.
Burly	MR. HATTON.
Sailor	MR. HEATON.
Rachel Heywood	MISS PHILLIPS.
Polly Briggs	MRS. HUMBY.

Tenants, Children, Villagers, &c. &c.

SCENE, The Country.

*** *This Drama was first represented on the 25th of January*, 1832.

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THE RENT DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in Grantley Hall.*

CRUMBS, BEANSTALK, FARMERS, *and other* TENANTS, *their* WIVES *and* CHILDREN, SERVANTS, *&c., discovered.*

Crumbs. By my heart! there's nought so pleasant as a rent-day.

Bean. Thee be'st right, Master Crumbs, nought; when the corn's in the barn, and the money's in the bag; but rent-day, wi' bad crops and low pockets, be an awful thing.

1*st Farmer.* It be, indeed. See what it ha' brought Phil Jones to. That seizure, Master Crumbs, ha' broke his heart. Warn't you a bit hasty like?

Crumbs. Ha, friends! it's a sad task to be steward. I often seize with tears in my eyes. What then? we must keep a clear book. I never turn out a family but—(*To one of the* FARMERS.)—you don't drink your ale, Master Stokes—with the greatest reluctance. Last week, when Miles and his children went to the workhouse, it—(*To another.*)—help your dame to some pie—it made me really uneasy. Yet one's feelings must suffer! one must keep a clear book.

Bean. Where be Martin Heywood, I wonder? Ha! things ha' ne'er gone right since the old man died of a sudden. I had hopes to see Martin here.

Crumbs. I've had hopes some time past. But here's a toast. Here's punctuality to all tenants!

Bean. Come, I'll gi' thee another. Here be mercy and liberality to all landlords!

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All. Mercy to all landlords!

Bean. Why, Master Crumbs, be there a spider in the glass?—thee dost not drink. Come, "mercy," man. There be few on us, I fear, would be worse for a little more on't. Take another sup.

Crumbs. No more. There, Master Beanstalk, is your receipt—there, friend Thomas, is yours. As for that matter about the tithes, Master Hodge, we must talk on't. All our business is now despatched, and now, another glass to our next merry meeting.

Bean. Stay. I'll clap a tail to that toast; so drink "good fortune to Master Heywood!"

All. Ay, ay!

Bean. Stop. And his wife, Rachel—not yet!—and all his darling little babes, God bless 'em! (*All drink.*) Why, Master Crumbs, what makes thee look so blank? It be a bad sign if a man make wry faces when he hears luck wished to another.

Crumbs. Wry faces? You mistake. But you take a great deal of interest in Martin Heywood?

Bean. Naturally. I ha' known him ever since he could ha' lain in my hat. My dame, here, stood for his wife, Rachel; and a blessed little blossom she was. If it hadn't been for bad times,—but I won't brag. [*Retires.*

2nd Farm. (*Aside to* CRUMBS.) Now, good master steward, you'll give me time, I hope?

Crumbs. Time isn't in my gift if I would.

2nd Farm. I have a wife and eight children.

Crumbs. A marvellous pity; but I must make up my book.

2nd Farm. Give me but two months.

Crumbs. You shall have two weeks. Don't reckon on an hour more: two weeks; and then I sell every stick.

2nd Farm. Have you no heart?

Crumbs. I must make up my book. Two weeks.

[FARMER *retires.* BEANSTALK, *who, with others, has filled his glass, comes down, and forces a glass on* CRUMBS.]

Bean. I say, Master Crumbs, the old toast at parting. "Here's mercy to all landlords!"

Crumbs. "Mercy—landlords." Farewell, farewell. (*Exeunt all but* CRUMBS.) They're gone: now to sort the money. (*Looking over papers, notes, &c.*) Heywood must pack—the farm must come into my hands. Let me reckon: another twelvemonth—the landlord still away—and my fortune is complete. I have scraped, and scratched, and wrung—'tis very well. Such another year, and farewell England.

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SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP *are seen looking in at window.*

Jack. (*Pointing out* CRUMBS *to* HYSSOP.) 'Tis he! I'll swear it.

Crumbs. Who's there? (SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP *disappear.*)

(*Enter* STEPHEN.)

Is it you, Stephen—talking to yourself?

Steph. Talking, sir? not I. Here be letters: this, from London; it has our master's crest.

Crumbs. Master! humph! (*Opens and reads.*) It is from young spendthrift. The old style—more money. He shall have it.

Toby Heywood. (*Without.*) No, no: I'll walk in. When he sees me, he'll be sure I'm here.

(*Enter* TOBY HEYWOOD.)

Servant, Master Crumbs.

Crumbs. Servant; I'd hoped to see your brother Martin. (*To* STEPHEN, *half-aside.*) Stephen, go to Bullfrog. Tell him to come to me to-night; I shall have business for him. Aye, and call on Burly, too, and tell him the same. [*Exit* STEPHEN.

Toby. Bullfrog and Burly! What devil's feast is afoot, that they must have a spoon in?

Crumbs. All trades must be filled: Bullfrog's is an ugly one.

Toby. Aye, but the ugliest of trades have their moments of pleasure. Now, if I were a grave-digger, or even a hangman, there are some people I could work for with a great deal of enjoyment.

Crumbs. That's Bullfrog's maxim: he's very merry.

Toby. The most jovial of brokers and appraisers. He levies a distress as though he brought a card of invitation; giggles himself into possession; makes out the inventory with a chuckle; and carts off chairs and tables to "Begone, dull care," or, "How merrily we live who shepherds be!"

Crumbs. True; in these matters he has a coolness.

Toby. Coolness! he'd eat oysters whilst his neighbour's house was in flames,—always provided that his own was insured. Coolness! he's a piece of marble, carved into a broad grin.

Crumbs. Well, well, your business with me?

Toby. My brother, Martin, has been once more disappointed.

Crumbs. So have I.

Toby. That's lucky. You'll be better able to feel for him.

Crumbs. I want money.

Toby. So does he.

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Crumbs. I'll give time, if there be any one to answer for him. Can't you assist him? have you nothing?

Toby. Yes; fifteen pounds a-year, as principal usher to the town free-school. My goods and chattels are a volume of "Robinson Crusoe;" ditto, "Pilgrim's Progress;" with "Plutarch's Morals," much like the morals of many other people —a good deal dog's-eared. If my uncle had made me a ploughman instead of a mongrel scholar, I might have had a mouldy guinea or so.

Crumbs. Has your brother no one to speak for him?

Toby. Now, I think on't, yes. There are two.

Crumbs. Where shall I find them?

Toby. In the churchyard. His grandfather and his father lie there. Go to the graves of the old men, and these are the words the dead will say to you: "We lived sixty years in Holly Farm; in all that time we never begged an hour of the 'squire; we paid rent, tax, and tithe; we earned our bread with our own hands, and owed no man a penny when laid down here. Well, then, will ye be hard on young Heywood; will ye press upon our child, our poor Martin, when murrain has come upon his cattle, and blight fallen upon his corn?" This is what the dead will say. I should like to know what the living has to answer?

Crumbs. (*Giving him the 'squire's letter.*) This.

Toby. (*Opening it.*) From the young 'squire. (*Reads.*) "*Master Crumbs, use all despatch, and send me, on receipt of this, five hundred pounds. Cards have tricked me, and the devil cogged the dice. Get the money at all costs, and quickly. Robert Grantley.*" Aye, a right true letter from an absent landlord.

Crumbs. 'Tis hard to be steward to a wild youth who looks not after his own estate. You see, he leaves me no discretion?

Toby. Oh, no! If the landlord lose at gaming, his tenants may suffer for't. The 'squire plays a low card: issue a distress warrant. He throws deuce-ace; turn a family into the fields. 'Tis only awkward to lose hundreds on a card; but very rascally to be behind-hand with one's rent.

Crumbs. As you say—very true. Good morning, Master Toby.

Toby. Good morning. Poor brother Martin wouldn't come himself, so I thought I'd step up and speak to you. But I'll tell him that you'll give him all time, and that he's not to make himself uneasy, and all that. I'll comfort him, depend on't. And, I say; when you write back to the 'squire, you can tell him, by way of postscript, if he must feed the gaming-table, not to let it be with money wrung, like blood, from the wretched. Just tell him, whilst he shuffles the cards, to remember the aching hearts of his distressed tenants. And when he'd rattle

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the dice, let him stop and think of the knuckles of the bailiff and the tax-gatherer, knocking at the cottage-doors of the poor. Good morning, Mr. Steward, good morning. [*Exit.*

Crumbs. Now to give my instructions to the beadle and appraiser, and out he goes. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Woodland View.*

Enter SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP.

Hyssop. Come, come; why do you loiter?

Jack. Don't you see that woman still at the stile?—the prettiest creature I've looked on this many a-day.

Hyss. Tush! now we're on business. Go on with your story. Let me see, where did that wench's black eyes interrupt us? Oh! you were about to tell me how you knew that this steward, Crumbs, as he is called, was your master, when you took to live by your wits and the nimbleness of your five fingers. Now, are you sure you know him?

Jack. Do I know my own hand? Thirty years ago, when but a boy, I ran away from my apprenticeship—

Hyss. Aye, of rope-making; a fatal profession. Go on.

Jack. Pshaw! I fell in with John Harris — for that's his real name—in London. He was a knight of the road of the first order, kept as pretty a blood, and shuffled a card better than any baronet of St. James's. Bless you! he gave the fashion to Hounslow and Finchley. Well, Newgate hath clipped many a brave fellow's wing. Captain Harris was taken, tried, and condemned for Tyburn.

Hyss. Then he got a reprieve?

Jack. Yes, in the way of some files, sent to him in a pigeon-pie, and twenty fathom of cord, baked in a few loaves. He gave them the slip and started for the Indies. There, I heard, he met with an Englishman; was brought back again, and here he is. Have you a mind to earn fifty pounds?

Hyss. If't may be done with the leisure of a gentleman.

Jack. 'Tis but to open your mouth. See. [*Takes out a seal-skin tobacco pouch, and from it an old hand-bill; gives it to* HYSSOP.] I have worn it about me for many a long day.

Hyss. (*Reading Bill:*—"*Fifty pounds reward! Escaped from Newgate! John Harris, a convict. He is five feet ten, of darkish complexion; oval face, quick black eyes, with an eager look: his mouth large and restless; his hair a deep chestnut brown, in close curls. His voice is full and his manner of speaking rapid. His walk short and hurried. Has a scar over the left eye; also a scar*

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on the back of the left hand.") This can never be the picture of that old man?

Jack. Ha! 'tis seven-and-twenty years since he sat for it, that's some time for one who hasn't walked upon velvet. Why, even *I* am changed. I can remember when my mother used to call me her "lovely little Jack." As for Harris, 'twould have done you good to hear him cry "stand!" It came sharp upon you like the click of a trigger. Step aside, Hyssop, here are two of the natives. [*They retire among the trees.*

Enter POLLY BRIGGS, BULLFROG *following her.*

Polly. Now, Mr. Bullfrog, don't teaze me.

Bullfrog. I teaze! I should like to know how a man with a freehold of twenty pounds per year, a pretty business, and a genteel figure, could teaze, even if he would? It's only poor people who teaze; we monied men delight.

Polly. Well, I'm very poor, Mr. Bullfrog.

Bullf. You are; it's your only fault.

Polly. Fault! poverty's no crime.

Bullf. Isn't it? well, it's so like I don't know the difference. It's a pity poor girls have pretty faces; they lead us prudent capitalists into many false reckonings. Oh, Polly! if I should love you.

Polly. La! what should you see to love in me?

Bullf. See! why, there's a beautiful face with its streaks of red, and the blue veins running up and down the white skin, for all the world like the ruled pages of a new ledger.

Polly. White skin! Wouldn't you be better pleased if it were yellow?

Bullf. La! why?

Polly. 'Twould remind you of your guineas, you know. And, I'm sure, you love nothing so well.

Bullf. Yes, one thing, almost: that pretty little red mouth. Oh, Polly! if you had but a small annuity, or expectations from a sick aunt, or anything of that kind, you'd be a perfect woman. But I must have a kiss.

Polly. A kiss! I never heard of such a thing!

Bullf. What an ignorant young woman you must be: a kiss is—

Enter TOBY HEYWOOD.

Toby. She knows. I taught her long ago. And harkye, Master Bullfrog,—

Bullf. Now, be cool. I'm always cool.

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Toby. You'll still be meddling? Don't you remember that you were once kicked?

Bullf. Yes. And wasn't I a picture of patience? Did I fly into a rage? No: I made twenty pounds by that job, and that didn't make me conceited either.

Toby. Take care, or I may kick too.

Bullf. No. Prudence won't let you.

Toby. Why not?

Bullf. You can't afford to pay for luxuries.

Toby. Oh, on such an occasion, I'd not mind running in debt. But, Polly, go to the farm; run, and comfort Rachel. Leave the appraiser to me. Go. (*Exit* POLLY.) What! waste your valuable time with a girl not worth a groat?

Bullf. That's true. And I ought to be down at Brown's, the millwright's.

Toby. Ha! no use going there. I'm told they barricade doors and windows. You'll never get in there.

Bullf. Ha! ha! You don't know my wit. I took possession this morning.

Toby. Why, how?

Bullf. Such a scheme! About an hour after Brown had let himself out of the window, I paid a little girl to go and knock at the door, and call for Mrs. Brown. I taught her her lesson; this was it: "Mrs. Brown, for heaven's sake!" —I made her say "heaven," because it sounded more real.

Toby. Yes, heaven is a good word to lie under.

Bullf. Bless you! I've found it so. "For heaven's sake! come to your husband,—he's chopped his leg clean through with an axe!" You should have heard Mrs. Brown scream. Out she ran, wringing her hands,—her three children tumbling after her,—and in I and the beadle walked.

Toby. Then 'twas all a lie?

Bullf. Lord love you only my wit. And so I told Mrs. Brown; and bade her wipe her eyes, and make herself comfortable whilst I took down the goods. I shall sell on Thursday.

Toby. Sell! You are throwing away your time knocking down tea-cups and wooden dishes. You should go to the colonies and sell the blacks.

Bullf. I certainly do pass off an article with a flourish.

Toby. Flourish! how capitally you'd dispose of a man, his wife, and six children!

Bullf. I'm not conceited; but I think I should. Hem! "Ladies and gentlemen, the next lot consists of eight mortals." — Stop, are blacks mortals?

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Toby. Why, with some it's a matter of doubt, so let them have the benefit of it.

Bullf. "Eight mortals. How much shall we say for the lot?"

Toby. Or you might ask,—"How much for the man—a strong-bodied labourer, a virtuous husband, and an affectionate father? He weighs fourteen stone, hasn't a single vice, stands five feet eleven, is very handsome and is going at only a handful of dollars."

Bullf. Must you talk about affection and all that?

Toby. Of course. Virtue is especially marketable in the West Indies. There, it's worth while being a constant husband and a doting parent; for one sells for a few dollars extra. Go to Jamaica by all means.

Bullf. I think I should succeed.

Toby. Succeed! After your story to Mrs. Brown, if your own father were going by auction, you'd knock him down with the greatest grace in life.

Bullf. Now, you flatter?

Toby. Impossible. With you, there's no improving upon truth.

Bullf. Well, that's really handsome. But I—

(*Enter* CRUMBS.)

Good day, Master Crumbs. I was coming by your order about—

Crumbs. In good time. He here!

Toby. Don't let me interrupt business. I'm going to the farm. Good by, Bullfrog; and, I say, if in the course of auction matters you've a lot of humanity to dispose of—

Bullf. Well?

Toby. Think of Mrs. Brown, and buy it in for yourself. [*Exit.*

Crumbs. A subtle, sneering rogue, that. Harkye, Bullfrog, you must this day seize on Heywood's goods. (SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP *come down.*) Strangers here!

Jack. Your servant, old sir.

Crumbs. Old sir!

Jack. Aye. There's no shame in gray hairs, is there—even though they once were a chestnut-brown? What then! hair will change.

Hyss. Yes, and quick black eyes with an eager look will grow dim and dull.

Jack. A deep voice will lose something of its music—humph!—and five feet ten shrink into five feet seven or eight.

Hyss. A large and restless mouth *may* last.

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Jack. Aye, and scars — (*Seizing the hand of* CRUMBS, *who stands amazed and trembling.*)—yes, scars will not rub out!

Crumbs. Villains! robbers!

Bullf. Robbers! shall I call the constable?

Crumbs. Peace! away!

Jack. Nay, nay, old gentleman: we are strangers, and ask a day's hospitality at the mansion.

Crumbs. Away—away!

Jack. As you will not give us house-room, will you tell me where I may find a printer? — I wish to distribute through the village some hundred copies of this little bill. (*Shows* CRUMBS *the hand-bill,—he staggers back confounded.*)

Bullf. A printer! My cousin Hairspace is the man. Does all my catalogues. Give me the bill.

Crumbs. Touch it not; touch it not, I say! Come, gentlemen—

Jack. Nay, we will not trouble you. (*To* BULLFROG.) Your cousin, you say?—

Bullf. The best printer forty miles about. In black, blue, or red ink, plain or ornamental,—there is no printer, who,—

Crumbs. The devil seize thee,—peace! Come, gentlemen; nay, you must with me to the mansion. We will have a brave dinner! Wine! wine! I do entreat you not to stay, my good friends.

Jack. As you're so pressing;—but we shall trouble you?

Crumbs. No, no; it gladdens me that I have met you. Come.

Bullf. (*Aside to* JACK.) My cousin's card.

Crumbs. What dost mutter?

Bullf. Mutter! La, Mr. Crumbs! I only presented Timothy's card. Must always think of trade, you know.

Crumbs. (*Madly.*) Think of trade! wouldst see me hanged?

Bullf. I never neglect business for pleasure.

Crumbs. Beware—beware—and follow me. Come, gentlemen; come, my good friends. Nay, you first, I entreat.

[*Exit* CRUMBS, *bowing off* JACK *and* HYSSOP.

Bullf. Beware—beware—to a freeholder!—I'll—no—I'm not rich enough to be in a passion. When I've made my fortune, then may I indulge in the feelings of a gentleman. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—A *Rustic Landscape.*

RACHEL *discovered, seated on a stile.*

Rachel. The sun is almost set, and yet I see not Martin. Oh,

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my dear husband—my poor children! heaven be kind to us, for I've almost lost all other hope. Ha, Martin! Martin!

MARTIN HEYWOOD *appears at the stile:—crosses it.*

Martin. Rachel—here! Why did you leave the farm?

Rachel. I could not stay there and you away. Our children, Martin—they cried for you. I could not speak to them—I could not stay. Now, Martin, your friend?

Martin. Friend!

Rachel. Oh, do not look so—do not!

Martin. I have done that to-day I never did before; I have wished myself dead—aye, dead—that I might be quit of all!

Rachel. And our children, Martin?

Martin. 'Twould be better for 'em. There's some spell upon me! Do what I will it does not thrive. Why, 'tis certain there's some curse upon me!

Rachel. Be patient, dear Martin.

Martin. Patient! I have been patient. Harvest after harvest's failed; flock after flock has died; yet have I smiled upon't, and gone whistling 'bout the fields. I have been hunted by landlord—threatened by the taxman—yet I've put a stout heart upon't, and never drooped. Rachel Heywood, you see me now without a shilling—without a home—my children with not a week's food before them—my wife near starving—and yet I'm patient.

Rachel. I never saw you so till now. Martin, what has happened?

Martin. I may sit down and see my little ones pine day by day; I may feel their wasting limbs, and hear them scream for bread; and I may stare in their white faces, and tell them to be patient. Patient!

Rachel. Look not so fiercely at me, Martin. Are they not my children—mine? Am I not their mother? Can your love be more than mine? But no; you did not mean that. Come, Martin, be not so hasty. What has happened?

Martin. No matter: let it rest with me.

Rachel. But it must not, Martin. How many a time have you said that you could have no secret from Rachel?

Martin. I don't remember that.

Rachel. Look there, Martin. How often have we met at yonder stile; how often have we waited there for hours, and talked of our wedding-day and all our hopes?—then you have said,—

Martin. Aye, those were gay days. Then, life seemed full of

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promise as a field of ripening corn. Those were happy times!

Rachel. They will come back, never fear it. Now, tell me, Martin, have you been to your friend?

Martin. I have been to Harry Wilson. The same Harry Wilson to whom my grandfather lent good guineas to begin the world.

Rachel. You asked him to lend you the money for a time.

Martin. I stammered it out somehow.

Rachel. And did he?

Martin. Damn him!

Rachel. Oh, Martin!

Martin. I thought I was talking to a brother. I told him all, Rachel, all—and he heard me with a smile on his face, and said—he was sorry.

Rachel. Then he could not assist us?

Martin. No. His money was laid out in ventures,—he had lost by lending;—but he was very sorry.

Rachel. And he offered nothing?

Martin. When I told him we had not a guinea,—not a home we could call ours,—not a certain meal,—the tears came into my eyes, and I felt like a thief whilst I said all this;—well, he wouldn't lend me a farthing! but, kind soul! he bade me take a glass of wine, and hope for better days! I took the wine, and pouring it upon the floor, wished that my blood might be so poured out from my heart if ever again I stood beneath his roof; and so I left him!

Rachel. And your other friend?

Martin. No: I asked no other. One denial was enough.

Rachel. Then every hope is gone.

Martin. No; there is one hope yet. And yet I cannot bear to think of it. Rachel, our children must not starve.—What say you, shall we cross the sea?

Rachel. What! leave the farm?

Martin. I am offered a place on an estate, far away in the Indies. What say you?

Rachel. Leave this place?

Martin. Why not? We shall find sun and sky and green fields there.

Rachel. But not our own fields, not our own sky, not the friends who love us, not the neighbours who respect us. Oh! think not of it. Our children! they would die there. Die amongst strangers! Martin, would you quit our home?

Martin. Our home! where is it?—the workhouse!—Ha! ha! —Our home! Rachel, it shall be. We'll not be pointed at as

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beggars. We'll be no burden to the parish. We'll take our children in our arms, and leave this place for ever.

Enter TOBY HEYWOOD.

Toby. Leave this place! what for, Martin; have you got scent of a gold-mine?

Rachel. Oh, speak to him—persuade him! He would go from here—go, and die in some foreign place.

Toby. Nay, he has more wisdom than that. Thou'rt not such a fool, Martin. Come, I'll give you better advice.

Martin. Spare it for those who ask it: I want none.

Toby. Come, don't snub your younger brother. If you did enter the world ten months and a few minutes before me, you can hear reason. Go to foreign parts, eh?

Martin. Shall I stay here and starve?

Toby. Come, Martin, we never looked sulkily at one another when we were boys; now, 'twould be too late to begin: we should make no hand of it. Starve!

Martin. Ay. Will not the steward seize?

Toby. No, no. I have been and talked to him.

Martin. You didn't beg for?—

Toby. Beg! There's little of the beggar in my face, I talked reason to him. I said, a man who hadn't money, couldn't well pay any. All you wanted was time; and he didn't refuse it.

Rachel. There, Martin; I told you not to be cast down. I knew we should yet be happy.

Martin. Still, there is no certainty that—

Toby. I tell you what, brother; you are one of those people who are so very fond of ill-luck, that they run half-way to meet it. Old Crumbs will give you time—I know it. Go, Rachel; go to the farm. Wipe your eyes, kiss the babies, take down the bacon, draw a mug of nut-brown, and Martin and I will find appetites. There, away with you.

Rachel. You will follow, Martin? There, look light again. That's well. We shall once more be happy—very happy! Fortune will change, be sure of it. [*Exit.*

Toby. Change! to be sure she will: fortune's a woman! Hang it, Martin! do muster up a laugh. There, now—practise that fifty times a-day, and care would as soon be hanged as dare to look at you. [*Exeunt.*

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SCENE IV.—*A Room in Grantley Hall. On the wall the portrait of a young female.*

Enter GRANTLEY, *shown in by* BULLFROG, *who is slightly intoxicated.*

Bullfrog. Master Crumbs will be with you, sir, in the knocking-down of a hammer. From London, sir?

Grantley. I am. A fine old mansion this.

Bullf. Beautiful. Capital piece of oak-tree pannelling that—nice bold carving, sir. Pretty cherubims' heads in the corners. That's a figure of Mercy. Should like to have the selling of the house and furniture.

Grant. The owner is indebted to your good wishes.

Bullf. The owner! Oh, he's a wild fellow! He's never among us. No, sir; he's a London spark. His father left him abroad; and, though the old man's been dead, and the young gentleman's been in England these two years, he has never paid us a visit.

Grant. Fond of a town life, I suppose?

Bullf. Very fond. And then he's so lucky in his steward.

Grant. Indeed?

Bullf. Oh! he's a jewel of a man—so punctual with his tenants. There's no keeping a guinea from him, sir. He's a delightful man for our business.

Grant. And your profession is——

Bullf. Appraiser and auctioneer. Happy to serve you. I made one seizure this morning, shall make another to-night. If you've thoughts of staying amongst us, and want to furnish, I can assist you to two or three good penn'orths. What, sir? you are looking at that picture? I don't know the painter. It's not a——

Grant. No—(*Musing.*)

Bullf. No. And it's not by—by—(*Aside:*—I must get an Italian smatter, or I shall never be able to knock down the painters.)

Grant. Is it a family portrait?

Bullf. Why, sir, between ourselves, if I were to put it up for auction, I should call it a riddle in an oak frame.

Grant. Why so?

Bullf. Why, more than twice I've caught Mr. Crumbs standing before it looking at it; and once—you'll hardly believe it, for nobody who knows him would—I caught him with the tears rolling down his cheeks. Nobody would believe it.

Grant. He is not generally given to strong emotion?

Bullf. Bless you! no, sir. He's too much a man of business for that. Here he comes. Not a word.

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Enter CRUMBS *from door in scene.*

Crumbs. Your servant, sir. Business must excuse me that I made you wait. (*To* BULLFROG: Go you and see that Burly is at hand. I seize within this hour. Go.)

Bullf. I will. (*Aside:*—but first for the other bottle with Captain Jack. I must better my taste in wines, if only in the way of business.) [*Exit at door.*

Grant. I shall tax your hospitality for some days. This letter is from my friend, Grantley.

Crumbs. He's well, I trust? (*Aside:* Curses on it!) (*Reads.*) "*The bearer is my most special friend: treat him with all respect as he were myself. He will stay to sport some week or two.*" I would, sir, we had had earlier notice. I fear me, you will find us ill-provided.

Grant. Never fear it.

Crumbs. In truth, sir, 'tis a dull spot. Here we see no one—hear no one.

Grant. Indeed, it seems still enough.

Crumbs. You never hear a sound—not a sound; unless it be the birds in the rookery, or at night a mouse scratching in the wall. (*Loud laughing and knocking within.* SILVER JACK *sings, in a loud voice:*

"May corn never fail, for that makes good ale;
But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys, brave boys!
But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys!"

Grant. Do the mice scratch thus early?

Crumbs. I—I—(*Laughing and noise continued*).

Grant. The rooks are somewhat jovial.

Crumbs. It hath never happened until now. They are the richest of the 'squire's tenants—devout, religious men; but to-day being rent-day——

Jack and Hyss. (*At the door.*) Hallo, Master Crumbs!

Crumbs. I come—I—(*To* GRANT.:) Men of worth and reputation.

Jack. (*At door.*) Master Crumbs! John Harris! Fifty pounds reward!

Crumbs. Damnation! (*Rushes up and opens folding-doors.* SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP *are seen, with* BULLFROG *trying to keep them back. They come down, all flushed with wine;* JACK *holding a bottle. Aside to them:* I am busy. I will return. Go!)

Jack. Busy! Damn business!

Bullf. No: don't damn business. I'm very drunk, but I can't damn business: it's profane.

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Jack. To leave your company, and—Oh! a gentleman! Introduce us. You won't? no?—I'll introduce myself—(*Puts bottle upon the stage, which* BULLFROG *takes up, and retires to back; seats himself in chair, and drinks.*) Servant, sir. Nice house, this. Capital wine; yes, and a civil steward. Sir, I beg your friendship. If you're for anything in this way, I—(*Taking from his pocket a pack of cards.*)

Hyss. Ay, sir; or if there be music in this—(*Rattling dice in box.*)

Grant. (*Aside:* Devout, religious men!)

Jack. We're not avaricious. We play for anything, from a marvedi to a thousand guineas.

Crumbs. No, no; the gentleman does not play. Go in, my good friends.

Grant. (*To* CRUMBS.) With your leave, I'll look about the grounds?

Jack. Fine spot, nice house, good wine—ay, and—(*Looking at portrait*)—pretty pictures. Well, I say—(*To* HYSSOP)—isn't that an angel?

Hyss. I can't tell: I've not been used to such company.

Grant. It is, indeed, beautiful. (*To* CRUMBS.) Tell me whose portrait is it? Did you know the lady?

Crumbs. She was a—a favourite of the late 'squire's. She's long since dead.

Jack. A favourite and dead! Ha! I suppose the 'squire was fond of her, and so broke her heart.

Crumbs. How dare you?——

Jack. (*Aside to him:* Phoo! phoo! "John Harris! fifty pounds reward!")

Crumbs. (*To* GRANTLEY.) Come, sir, I will show you——

Grant. Do not quit your friends. With your leave, I'll go alone. Gentlemen, I am the humblest of your servants. (*Aside:* Devout, religious men!) [*Exit.*

Hyss. A pretty spoken fellow.

Jack. And a rich one. Did you see the diamonds on his fingers? I warrant me his pockets are—umph! a prize? (*To* CRUMBS.) What say you?

Crumbs. I—I!—

Jack. I'd forgot. You only rob now as a steward. You're one of the regulars.

Crumbs. Rob! harkye!—

Jack. Come, come, John Harris; no big words. I've something here wouldn't look so well framed as that red-lipped young lady.

Crumbs. Well, well, we're friends; but be cautious, I implore you. Come, you shall have more wine, wine!

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Jack. Wine! Ay, we will have more. And then for our plans. old boy; then for our plans. Why, how lucky it was that we met one another! You see, there were a few pressing inquiries about us in London, so we thought we'd take the benefit of country air, until the anxiety of our friends cooled a little. But then to think of the luck of our meeting! Ar'n't you delighted? (*Embracing him.*)

Crumbs. Yes, yes. But go in. You shall have wine. I'll go see to it.

Jack. Wine! wine! Ha! ha! We drink courage with wine. Success to the grapes,—(*Sings.*)

"But a blight to all hempseed, brave boys, brave boys,
A blight to all hempseed, brave boys!"

[CRUMBS *forces* JACK *and* HYSSOP *into room in scene.*

Crumbs. The devil has forsaken me! To be tracked out after so many years! This visitor, too! No, my course is clear. But how to dispose of that ruffian? Ha! he has been prating of some woman;—by the description 'tis Heywood's wife.—I'll put him in possession of the farm, and thus rid me of him, whilst—let me see—

Bullf. (*Asleep.*) What shall we say for this wine, fifty years in bottle? Thank'e, sir; it's going,—going,—(*Lets bottle fall.*)

Crumbs. Scoundrel! Listening?

Bullf. Dreaming—only dreaming. I just knocked down the sweetest ten dozen——

Crumbs. Up, or I'll strangle you! Is't thus you mind your business?

Bullf. Business!—that's enough. Cry business!—and, if I don't move, you may send for the undertaker.

Crumbs. Hence!

Bullf. I'm going. Business is business. Capital wine. (*Sings.*)

"And a blight to all hempseed"—

Crumbs. Hence! hence! (*Forces him off.*)

SCENE V.—*The Interior of* HEYWOOD'S *Farm-House.*

MARTIN, RACHEL, *and their* CHILDREN, *seated at table, with* TOBY, BEANSTALK, *and his* DAME.

Beanstalk. Come, Martin; here be better times! So; we shall be jovial yet, man.

Rachel. Ay, that we shall; and so I tell him, farmer; but he will not heed me.

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Martin. We've had nought but ill-luck since the old man died.

Beans. 'Twas awfully sudden, to be sure.

Martin. Here he was, one minute as strong and as lightsome as ever; when death fell upon him like a bolt, and he lay upon that bed, panting like a run-down hare.

Toby. Odd's, Martin! look into your ale—you'll see something better than dying men. Our grandfather's in heaven. Here's to the memory of him! Let him rest.

Martin. I tell you I can't but think of him. Abroad or at home I see him. Sometimes, when I'm falling into sleep, his eyes seem to stare close at my face, and I start and gasp again; and then I see him looking and pointing at that chair. You know, farmer, he'd sit in it for hours, with one of the youngsters on his knee.—Still I see him with his hand stretched forth, and his throat working, as though the words were there but couldn't out; —and so he died. Depend on't, there was something on the old man's mind.

Toby. Brother, shall I go to the church-yard and bring you a skull and cross-bones?—for, in your present humour, they're your fittest company.

Martin. I'm a fool to think so. Come, farmer, your hand; Toby, yours; Rachel, lass, we'll be merry yet. Here's to better times!

Toby. I warrant me, there's more comfort in that than in ghosts' eyes at midnight. Why, it's up in your cheek already, man. Take another.

Martin. With all my heart. And again I'll drink, "here's better times!"

Enter POLLY BRIGGS.

Polly. Oh, farmer Heywood! Here comes the steward and that nasty appraiser, and the beadle; and all the folks say they're coming here to seize.

Martin. Rachel, stand aside!—that gun!

Rachel. Oh, Martin! husband! for the love of heaven!——

Toby. What would you, Martin?

Martin. Shoot the first man that crosses yonder threshold Let me go!

Beans. Come, come, Martin, be not rash; thee'st no reason to be so.

Martin. No reason! You have a wife and children, yet say I have no reason! Are not here five—five bitter reasons? The gun!

Toby. Martin, Martin, are you mad?

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Martin. (*Falling despairingly into the chair.*) I am mad. God help me!—I am mad!

Enter CRUMBS.

Crumbs. This is a disagreeable business.

Toby. I should know that by your looking so pleased.

Crumbs. I want my due.

Toby. You'll have it some day. I wish the law allowed me to give it you now.

Beans. Come, come, master Crumbs; have compassion.

Toby. Compassion!—Tell him to have three heads.

Rachel. Do not anger him. (*To* CRUMBS:) Good sir, give us time,—but a short time: have mercy.—Kneel, children, kneel.

Martin. Stand! if you're of my blood. They are the children of an honest man, and must not kneel before a villain.

Crumbs. Mighty well. You owe a twelvemonth's rent, and, instead of money, you give blustering words. Rent-day passes lightly with you.

Martin. Lightly! Farmer, as I am a man, I have lived a whole year in torment. Day has been all misery to me, and bed no bed. Still, as rent day would come, I have lain awake whole nights, and every night was more dreadful than the past. Then I've tried to think no more, but dug my head into my pillow and fixed my fingers tightly in my hair, and tried to stun myself to sleep;—but all would not do. There appeared a something hanging over me—about me;—heavy and stifling it seemed—and my blood would run hot and cold—and so I've lain and watched, and prayed the daylight in. The next night worse, for it brought the time still nearer. And when at last the rent-day came, and I without one groat, I've crossed yon door, not with an English farmer's tread, but with a thief's pace crawling to the gallows! This is to pass rent-day lightly!

Crumbs. Why not give up the farm? Why not leave the house?

Martin. Why not? My father's father grew grey under this roof; and sooner should these beams fall and knock my brains out than I would quit them. Here I was born, and here I will die. If you would take me through yon door, master Crumbs, I tell you it must be heels foremost. Leave the house! I almost love it like a living thing.

Crumbs. All very fine. For my part, I can't see why one house shouldn't be as good as another.

Martin. Likely you cannot. But I have crawled a little child upon this floor—the very door-step is worn with my feet. I have

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seen my mother, fathers, die here!—I—I tell you here I first saw the light, and here I'll close my eyes.

Rachel. Dear Martin, be calm.

Crumbs. You'll not oppose the law?

Martin. I know not that. I tell you, don't provoke me. Here I sit—in my grandfather's chair: in the chair of that old man, who, for forty years, paid rent and tithe to the last guinea. Here I sit! and I warn you put not a hand upon a stick or thread!

Crumbs. Come in, friends.

Enter BULLFROG *and* BURLY, *followed by* NEIGHBOURS.

Martin. I warn you back.

Burly. What say you to our warrant, master Heywood?

Martin. I tell you not to tempt me. I cannot trust myself, for I am desperate! Leave the farm!

Crumbs. (*To* BULLF. *and* BURLY.) You know your duties. [*Exit.*

Bullf. Business is business. (*Taking inventory.*) One bedstead—

Martin. Let me come at them!

Toby. Nay, nay, brother!

Rachel. Husband!

Children. Father!

Martin. Rachel!—my poor babes!—take all, take all!—(*Sinks into a chair.*)

Bullf. One bedstead—one table——

Beans. and Neighbours. Shame! shame!

Toby. Blood-suckers!

Bullf. One toasting-fork—one bird-cage—one baby's rattle—

Martin. God help us! God help us!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The interior of* HEYWOOD'S *Farm. Day breaking.*

POLLY BRIGGS *discovered, seated.*

Polly. Dear me! how heavily the time goes,—and the farm,—I declare it doesn't look as it used to do. I'm so tired—yet I must keep my eyes open for company's sake.

Enter RACHEL.

Rachel. They sleep soundly. Poor children! Heaven only

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knows where they will rest another night. I stood and watched them; and they looked so innocent—so happy—they smiled, and my heart died within me.

Polly. Don't take on so. Martin will return with good news, never fear.

Rachel. I'm so wretched, I have lost even hope. My pretty babes! had we been always beggars, then you could have borne cold, nipping winds, rough words, uncertain food;—but now, they'll pine, and so they'll die. Even our children will be taken from us.

Polly. Well, I never thought you could talk after this fashion.

Rachel. Nor I. But then I had not seen my infants lying on a bed no longer theirs. Is it not almost daybreak? Had Martin been successful, he would surely have been back.

Polly. Now, why will you think the worst? I shouldn't wonder if he returned with a big bag of money. I'll go to the end of the lane, and see if either he or Toby be coming.

Rachel. No, do not leave me—the stranger up-stairs.—Yet go, but do not stay. (*Exit* POLLY.) Sure the morning will never come. Oh, yes! 'twill come too soon. Then another, and another, and we are houseless beggars. I walk about the place like a restless ghost. To know the worst were better than to remain thus. (*Sits.*) I am worn and tired—even too tired to sleep. (*Fatigued, she falls asleep.*)

Enter SILVER JACK.

Jack. All quiet. Harris must have put some devil into that wine, or I had never slept so. Here am I in possession,—a watch-dog over spoons and platters, whilst Hyssop, I warrant me, is rarely plucking that new-comer. Jack, Jack, so it has ever run; a pair of bright eyes has been a will-o'-the-wisp to you, leading you through quagmires all your life. Ha! she's here and sleeping. How tired, pale, yet pretty she seems! She looks good, and—pshaw! we all look good asleep. How still the place is; no one here but ourselves; yes, the children. I just passed through their room, and saw them looking as fresh and as rosy—I felt as I hadn't felt for many a day.—'Twas a fool's moment, and is gone. (*Approaching her; she wakes.*)

Rachel. Martin! Martin! You here?

Jack. I couldn't well sleep, so I thought I'd come down and keep you company. This is a much pleasanter room.

Rachel. It is at your service. I can go to my children's.—(*Going.*)

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Jack. They're all fast asleep. Bless their little hearts! I stood and looked at them just now till I quite loved them. They are very handsome.

Rachel. And most unfortunate.

Jack. Why, this is an awkward business. But you may yet find friends.

Rachel. Friendship!

Jack. We sometimes find it where we had least thoughts of it. Your children are very like you.

Rachel. It has been remarked. I—(*Going.*)

Jack. Yes, full purses ought to go with full hearts.

Rachel. 'Twould save much misery. I would your employer—

Jack. My employer! Why, to be sure, old Crumbs was once my master: but times are changed; we are now bosom friends. I am here only to oblige him.

Rachel. Your task can hardly be a pleasant one.

Jack. Nay, 'tis very pleasant. Look you, I have been rolling this many years about the world, and this (*displaying a purse*) has still been gathering. Those pretty babes of your's.—I'm mightily taken with them. Where is your husband?

Rachel. Gone, as a last hope, to try to borrow. He should have been back by this.

Jack. I never found this purse so troublesome before. Will you lighten it for me? Come, no ceremony. You want money, I don't.

Rachel. Oh, this is kind, most kind. Yet, from a stranger—

Jack. Pshaw! ill-fortune now and then makes sudden acquaintances.

Rachel. Indeed, sir, I—I cannot.

Jack. Yet the poor babes must sleep somewhere to-morrow. Come!

Rachel. My husband will speedily be here; he, perhaps—

Jack. Nay, when I'm in the humour, I wouldn't be balked. Now, or never—hang it, take the purse.—(*Forces the purse into her hand.*)

Rachel. My husband will return it with a thousand thanks.—My children are saved! Oh, you have made us most happy!

Jack. That's enough for me. As for returning the money, that may rest with yourself. 'Twould have been hard for you to see your husband in a gaol; yourself and little ones without a home.

Rachel. Only to hear you name it, makes me tremble.

Jack. But there's no such hard fortune for you. No: you may stay in your farm, have your children about you, whilst all fears of beggary and the workhouse—why, you seem ill.

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Rachel. The sudden joy—'tis nothing, and will pass.

Jack. Come, sit down—(*She sits.*)—There, you are looking better whilst I speak. (*Hanging over the chair.*) As for the money, if you like to have it as a gift, 'tis a bargain between us. So, to make it binding, just one kiss.—(*Throwing his arms about her.*) Why do you look so at me?

Rachel. I was deceived! I thought I saw a friend. I was deceived.

Jack. Tush! I am your friend. Come, one kiss!

Rachel. There (*dropping the purse at his feet*) is your money. (*Going.*)

Jack. Will you be blind to your own good? I tell you the money shall be yours—all yours. I care not for one penny of it.

Rachel. Be silent, and let me go.

Jack. Think of your children—your husband—

Rachel. I do, and scorn you!

Jack. Are you mad? Listen to my offer.

Rachel. Had you made it when the world went well with us, —when this roof sheltered a happy family—when every day brought its plenty, its content—when we had no fear of poverty or persecution—even then, the thought of that you purpose should have brought the blushes to your face, and made you dumb with shame;—but now,—with want at our hearth—a husband mad with sorrow—children unprotected—now to offer, —oh, you have a heart of stone, or you could ne'er have thought it!

Jack. Hear reason, and take the purse. I tell you I do not mean—

Rachel. You mean the worst. He who would destroy a happy fire-side, is vile and shameless; but he who insults its wretchedness, is base indeed.

Jack. Base! Look you—zounds! to be whipped by a woman's tongue! Come, don't let us part so. This is all very well, but, but—hang it! can't we understand one another!

Rachel. Oh, Martin! Martin!

Jack. He may sleep in a prison to-morrow.

Rachel. Let me pass. I must, will, go to my children.

Jack. And they may want a breakfast.

Rachel. Villain! though you insult the wife, have pity on the mother. (*He seizes her.*) Let me go!

Jack. Not now—I have gone too far

Rachel. Oh! you will not! Mercy! Martin! He comes not.

Jack. You may rave! You've roused me, and I'll not be trifled with.

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Rachel. Help! help! My husband!—he is here!

[JACK, *surprised, falls back,—she rushes to the door, and seizes a woodcutter's bill, lying on some wood near the wall.*]

Jack. Tricked!

Rachel. You see, a sound will make a coward of the wicked! Do not come near me; pray, do not. This, though you die, shall protect me.

Jack. Well, well, I own I've been wrong—I ask pardon.—Come back. Put your trust—

Rachel. In this? I say again, stir not! Stay beneath this roof! Stay in the poor man's house you would have outraged! Stay,—blush,—and beg to be forgiven. [*Exit at door.*

Jack. Gone!—what devil is it that cows me? Ha! She flies down the lane. That copse!—yes, though I run to the gallows, I would follow her. [*Exit.*

Bulf. (*Putting his head from between bed-curtains.*) Run to the gallows!—you needn't hurry yourself; the gallows will wait for you. Well, this I call an adventure! Now, if this cause comes to trial, I'm witness ready for either side. As I'm a sworn appraiser it's almost daylight—why, I must have been asleep these seven or eight hours, and nobody knew it. This all comes of the steward's wine. Eh? I hear a footstep, I must sleep and listen. (*Disappears.*)

Enter POLLY.

Polly. Why, Rachel! Oh! gone upstairs, I suppose, to cry over the poor little things! Well, I've no good news for her.—I went all down the lane, and came back over the fields, and saw no signs of Martin or Toby either. If these are the troubles that are to come upon the married, I'm sure a poor girl is better single. There's nothing but vexation in this world!—and, dear me, I'm so sleepy!—I haven't had a single wink all night, and it's a shame, too; for there stood the bed so inviting, as though it said, do come and lie down! There'll be no harm in sitting upon it. (*Sits on the bed.*) How I should like to lie down.

Bulf. Well, there's plenty of room for two!

Polly. Thieves! Murder!

Enter TOBY *at door.*

Toby. Polly!—Bullfrog!

Polly. Oh! the wretch!

Toby. What's this?—speak!

Bulf. How can I, with your fingers at my windpipe?

Toby. Answer me! what is all this?

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Polly. Yes, explain, Mr. Bullfrog.

Bulf. (*Half-aside to* POLLY.) Don't be a fool, and nobody will be the wiser.

Polly. The wiser, sir?—the wiser?

Toby. Speak, I say!

Bulf. (*Aside:* Now I'll talk nettles to him.) Well, Mr. Heywood; the fact is, I—I am but a man.

Toby. Why, no; I never took you for an angel.

Bulf. Perhaps not, Mr. Heywood; but the fair sex—the fair sex can discover modest merit.

Polly. Now, as I am alive, I was here alone,—and never knowing that that wretch—

Bulf. Fie! wretch? What, *now!* call me a wretch?

Polly. That monster!—

Bulf. Come, no scandal. If you will tell the truth, I can't help it; but no scandal.

Polly. That—that—

Bulf. There, don't press her: you see her feelings—

Toby. Master Bullfrog, you've had a marvellous escape.

Bulf. How?

Toby. In not lighting on as great a fool as yourself; else, my life on't, your head had been broken.

Bulf. A fool! And have you the audacity to call me a fool?

Toby. And not all fool: for the rogue is so equally mixed, there's no saying where either fool or rogue begins or ends.

Bulf. Fool! rogue! the law will tell you this is slander.

Toby. I know it: I'm speaking the truth.

Bulf. And the law shall mend my character.

Toby. The character that needs law to mend it, is hardly worth the tinkering. In one word, how came you here?

Polly. That's right. Make him tell you.

Bulf. Tell! well, you're a courageous woman! What then, you've no suspicion?—there's no making you unhappy?

Toby. No.

Bulf. Mrs. Heywood will be a fortunate woman.

Toby. What put you into that bed?

Polly. Yes, what put you into that bed?

Bulf. If you must know,—this. (*Producing bottle from his pocket.*) This put me into bed; it's done as much for many a man.

Toby. What do you mean?

Bulf. Mean?—Didn't I attend here as sworn appraiser, and didn't I make the inventory? Yes, here it is: "One cradle, one toasting fork,"—all right; move a stick, and I'll indict you! Well, there was a great noise in the family; one running

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one way—one another,—children crying—women fainting, a smell of burnt feathers—and your brother swearing, enough to shock any christian who knows what virtue is, and pays his way. I had brought a little wine from the squire's, and, all of a sudden, I found myself quite alone here, so I set down upon the bed, and I drank and drank; then I got on the bed, then between the blankets; pulled-to the curtains, looked at my inventory—(some of the things will sell well)—said my prayers,—droned a hymn, and went to sleep. Then,—no, I pass over the rest; when you came in,—you—but I musn't go any further.

Toby. Yes, you must.

Bulf. I tell you, I can't.

Toby. I tell you, you must—you must go over that door-step If you remain here two minutes longer, 'twill not be on your legs, I promise you.

Bulf. I give you warning! Remember, I'm a sworn appraiser.

Toby. You're the better able to judge for what you ought to be knocked down.—Come, pack!

Bulf. I'm going, but only threaten me, and I'll call down the man from upstairs—him who's in possession.—(*Aside:* They mus'n't know he's gone, or they'll block up the premises.)

Toby. I've given you fair words.

Bulf. Keep to 'em; you can't do better. Ha! drop your arm, or I'll call the man. If you put me in bodily fear, it's no fault of mine!—Now, Mr. Toby?—here! my good man. My good man.

Toby. Will you go?

Bulf. I will, (*aside:* to give Crumbs notice.) Ha! I'll call!—I tell you, I'll call. As for that young woman, if you demand any satisfaction?—oh! you don't? well, it's very prudent of you.—Don't stir a step, or down he comes.—And now—now (*aside:* to put another man in.) My good man, see that they don't move a stick. [*Exit.*

Polly. If you'll believe me, my dear Toby, I never dreamt that that wretch—that villain—that—

Toby. I'm sure you must be intimate with him by the correctness of your description. Let the fool go. Where's Rachel?

Polly. With the children. Have you seen nothing of Martin?

Toby. No. For once I fear the worst. But my mind's made up. I'll go to London.

Polly. Mercy save us! To London?

Toby. To London; though I walk every inch of the way, and live upon blackberries. I'll see the young squire himself.

Polly. But why go,—why not write?

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Toby. No. A letter's but a scribbled bit of paper, to be tossed aside, and there an end. No! He shall look in my face, and hear me talk. And if I don't bring the blood into his cheek, why, there's not a blush to be had out of all London.

Polly. Don't be rash. Do but consider who the squire is, and who you are.

Toby. That's what I intend to let him know. I shall tell him, if landlords are too proud or too idle to look after the comforts of their tenants, and to live upon their own lands, why 'tis a great pity that Providence should have entrusted them with any. What! havn't we paid truly for sixty years? and now, that a rascal should screw and grind and crush us—No! 'tis a good thought, for it's come so late.—I'll go to London.

Polly. Martin may yet bring good news.

Toby. He may; but I'll provide against the worst. You go to Rachel. I'll be hence soon. My luggage won't stop my speed upon the road. Yes, and now I have it, I'll once more to the mansion: and if old Crumbs be as deaf as ever, I'll see if the 'squire himself be not less hard of hearing than his servant.

[*Exeunt severally.*

Scene II.—*A Copse.*

Enter Rachel *hurriedly.*

Rachel. I hear his step. Yes, there again! 'Tis he. Could I but gain the main road! I cannot stir. I am almost dead with grief and fear. (*She hides.*)

Enter Silver Jack, *in pursuit.*

Jack. This was the place. I'm sure 'twas here!

Enter Hyssop, *hastily.*

Hyss. Jack, is't you?

Jack. Ay; did you pass a woman in fast flight?

Hyss. A woman!—will you never be serious?—Come with me.

Jack. Stop till I have found my runaway.

Hyss. And lost a golden prize. I was coming for you.

Jack. A prize! What do you mean?

Hyss. That visitor at the mansion. Why, he has heaps of guineas, rings, and a brilliant snuff-box that alone would make us.

Jack. Well?

Hyss. Well?—If you're the Silver Jack of yesterday they must be ours.

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Jack. How ?

Hyss. Easily. He is now in bed. I have left open all the doors.—(RACHEL *shows herself through the trees, listening.*)—We can get into his chamber, and then—

Jack. But if he wake and resist.

Hyss. A knife !

Jack. The booty is large ?

Hyss. I tell you, enough to set us up.

Jack. Where the devil can that woman have flown ?

Hyss. A woman !—It's a pity women aren't thief-catchers, for they'd only have to show you the darbies, and you'd run your hands into 'em. Will you join me, or shall I do the work alone.

Jack. I'm for you. But you're too much of a philosopher: you should consider one's little frailties. Man was born to love, and that's my weakness. If he stir, here are two bullets for his brains. The doors are open, you say ?

Hyss. Every one. (RACHEL *glides off before them.*) And now, for the shiners. [*Exeunt.*

Enter MARTIN.

Martin. Poor Rachel ! I hadn't the heart to go to the farm. For her—for my children's sake, I'll once more try to move the steward. It almost chokes me to think of it; but it must be tried. Every one refuses me: 'tis my last hope. If that fail too, 'tis needless to whimper about it,—good bye, farm ! I have promised to give my answer to-day, and it may be, to-night we sleep upon the sea. Now, for master Crumbs: to beg and pray, and—be refused. He is an early riser, and I may now see him without fear of interruption. If he denies me, why then for a foreign home, for I have lost my own. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*An old Gallery in Grantley Hall. Door in scene leading into apartment.*

Enter HYSSOP *and* JACK. RACHEL *follows, and retires at back.*

Hyss. You see all the doors were open ?

Jack. Yes; it's what I call housebreaking made easy. No one stirring either. Where's Crumbs ?

Hyss. Vanished in a blue flame, for what I know. I hope he means no mischief, but I've scarcely seen him since he went with you to the farm. Should he blow on us now ?

Jack. He dares not, it would cost him his neck.

Hyss. Yet we'll not trust him. We'll do this piece of work on our own behalf. Then—for I've left nothing unprovided—

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there are a couple of horses, ready saddled, in the stable; we'll spare not the spur: and once off, let the steward settle the account as best he may.

Jack. Where does the spark sleep?

Hyss. In yonder chamber. I have secured the key. The bird is nicely caged. Come!

[*Goes to the door; opens it, leaving the key in.* JACK *pulls* HYSSOP *back.*

Jack. Stay, Frank. I've been thinking of it—there must be no blood in this.

Hyss That's at the option of the gentleman. I've no objection, if it can be made comfortable to him.

Jack. 'Twould make a stir that might be fatal to us. You must promise me.

Hyss. As far as I can keep my temper I do. Now, then; for there's no time to lose. (*At this moment* RACHEL, *who has secured the key, glides into the room. She is seen by* HYSSOP, *who staggers back.*) Ha! trapped!

Jack. What do you mean?

Hyss. A woman entered that room!

Jack. You dream! [*Rushes to door, and looks through keyhole.*

Hyss. There! I hear her footstep.

Jack. Why, no! yes—it is the farmer's wife!

Hyss. And there! (RACHEL *is heard to bolt the door.*) She bolts the door. We're rarely gulled! Now, there's but one plan. We'll force the way.

Jack. Hold! her husband!

Enter MARTIN.

Martin. All the doors open, yet not a soul about. (*Sees them.*) Is the steward?—(*Aside:* Surely 'tis he who was put into the farm?)

Jack. (*Aside to* HYSSOP: Peace!—I have it.) You wanted the steward?

Martin. Yes. Did he not put you into my house?

Jack. Aye, but I've finished my errand there: 'twas not the pleasantest.

Martin. I come to beg for time. Had I any one to intercede for me—

Jack. You may be quite easy. You have a friend, depend on't.

Martin. I know not where.

Jack. There! In that room is a young London spark, the 'squire's acquaintance—the door bolted, and with him—yes, you'll keep the farm:—'twas he who sent me to your house.

Martin. He! For what!

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Jack. You've a pretty wife, he has plenty of money.—I delivered my message, and there your wife is.

Martin. My wife! villain! Unsay the lie—upon your knees unsay it—or, were you the father of all falsehood, I would not quit you.

Jack. Leave your hold! I say, your wife.

Martin. My Rachel! Why, how you look at me!

Jack. Knock at the door, perhaps she'll answer.

Martin. I am a wretched, ruined man; but do not play with me. Grief has worn me, but revenge will make me strong. If this be a lie!—

Jack. Knock at the door.

Martin. There seems blood before my eyes, and I am of a sudden weak and old.

Jack. Knock at the door.

Martin. I'll tear his life out!

Hyss. Why, that's manful. Here's that will help you.

[*Cocking a pistol and putting it into* MARTIN'S *hand.*

Martin. Come out, I say!

Enter GRANTLEY, *armed with a brace of pistols.* RACHEL *following him.*

Grant. (*Speaking as he enters.*) Villains! I am armed!

Martin. Die!

Rachel. What would you?

Martin. What! you cling to him,—before my eyes!—Rachel Heywood, I forgive that man! (*Dropping the pistol.* JACK *and* HYSSOP *steal off.*) Let him but send a bullet through the heart you've broken, and I will thank him with my latest breath.

Grant. This your husband,—and leagued with the robbers!

Rachel. No, no; he knows not what he says. Grief has distracted him.

Martin. Yes, grief. Falsehood where I hoped for truth—scorn where I had looked for love—shame, where I had built my greatest pride.

Grant. Go, I pardon you—I spare you.

Martin. Pardon! Spare! I have at home four motherless children;—what, do you spare me them? Will you leave the poor man one miserable comfort?

Rachel. Husband!

Martin. Can your lips yet say that word? Heaven forgive you!—can you yet speak it? Let it be for the last time! Never let us look again upon each other's face. Away! My heart

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sinks at your touch! I leave you, and may God pardon and protect you! [*Rushes off.*

Rachel. Martin! Martin! Oh! he is lost with misery!

Grant. Fear not—for your sake I will not accuse him.

Rachel. Accuse!

Grant. Nay, I perceive and value your motives. You would not suffer your husband to become a criminal. You preserved, it may be, my life. I thank you and pardon him

Rachel. And was it for this I saved you?—for this have endured the bitterest words that wife can listen to?—for this have made him mad? Sir, I never saw you till this hour. I never heard of you till named by villains who would have destroyed you. Then I flew to give you warning—I saved you; and you give me this reward,—suspicion of my husband.

Grant. Your eloquence, my good woman, does not deceive me. The other villains shall be pursued. For your husband, trust me, he is safe. [*Exit.*

Rachel. 'Tis no matter.—I will go home. Home! Did he not forbid me? Oh! he knew not what he said! And yet he found me—Oh! that he should harbour such a thought! I will fly and explain all; for now I should go mad to live one moment from him. [*Exit.*

Enter CRUMBS.

Crumbs. All is stored—all packed—all the harvest of my thrift and enmity. Ye cursed walls, I leave ye to your owner—to him whom I had vainly hoped to beggar—to sink into the dust a wretched, undone spendthrift!—May ye become the haunt of gamesters,—of hungry, smooth-faced knaves, who flatter and devour! May ye be staked upon a card, and pass from him who stakes ye! For ten years have I dwelt here, nursing my revenge. For ten years has vengeance been to me as a food—a nourishment. I have lived and gloated on it. May others finish the ruin I've begun! Now I must leave, ere my visitor, plagues light upon him! be stirring. That villain, Jack, is still at Heywood's farm—his companion yet asleep. I live within the gallows' foot whilst near them. I have hid my treasure in the laurel hedge. I've bought the captain of the vessel, and this night I leave the shore. I walk 'mongst pitfalls whilst I tread it.

BULLFROG *runs in.*

Bullf. Oh, Master Crumbs! such an affair!

Crumbs. Peace, ye roaring fool!

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Bullf. Fool! Early as it is, you're the second man who has called me a fool this morning. I come upon business.

Crumbs. To-night—to-morrow.

Bullf. Not my maxim. Shut your door upon business, and business will soon forget to knock at it. Your friend, Captain Jack,—

Crumbs. What of him?

Bullf. He might be a good hand to put in possession if one were to distrain a nunnery; but where a quick eye is to be kept on chairs and tables, he's as blind as Cupid.

Crumbs. What jargon is this?

Bullf. I only hope there'll not be an action; but if there should be,—

Crumbs. Speak out, or I'll throttle you.

Bullf. There certainly is a conspiracy to call me fool and choke me. Don't stare at me in that manner: it isn't business-like.

Crumbs. Speak, or begone.

Bullf. Well, then, it's a serious truth that the Heywoods might clear out the farm; for nobody is there to prevent them.

Crumbs. Is that all?

Bullf. All? what! where I have once seized? what's to become of my reputation? I employ nobody but respectable, steady men. The fact is, Captain Jack was above his calling, for he made love to the farmer's wife.

Crumbs. Well?

Bullf. Not well, Mr. Crumbs. When a man's on business he should be above such trifles.

Crumbs. Where is he now?

Bullf. Run off—left the premises in the most scandalous manner. I shouldn't wonder if he comes here.

Crumbs. (*Aside:* I must be gone.)

Bullf. You are not going? I must put another man in, you know? I say I must—

Crumbs. Leave me.

Bullf. Business! Who shall I put in?

Crumbs. Any one—no one—the devil! [*Rushes off.*

Bullf. I'll have nothing more to do with any of your acquaintance. Why, he's quite a fury. I see it: I know he dabbles;—stocks must have fallen. Nothing else could put a man in such a passion. (STEPHEN *is hurrying across.*) Stephen! Stephen! I'll ask him.

Steph. I can't stop now. The whole place is in an uproar.

Bullf. Well, they've kept it very quiet. What's the matter?

Steph. There's been robbery, and nearly—

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Bullf. Robbery?

Steph. Yes, and nearly murder.

Bullf. Murder's very bad; but I hope there's no property lost?

Steph. We don't know what's lost yet. But for the two chaps you drank with and were all such friends, the gentleman offers a reward for whosoever seizes them.

Bullf. A reward! I'll put on my cricketting pumps and run directly. Are they thieves, think you?

Steph. You've been more in their company than I have. There's Toby Heywood in the garden. Go, and talk to him. Business, you know—

Bullf. Business!—right. Toby here! I'll just run and put Nokes into the farm, and then after my friends. I say, what's happened to Master Crumbs?

Steph. Why, between you and me, the steward—but while I talk to you, I may miss what the gentleman offers. [*Runs off.*

Bullf. Something wrong with the steward! If he should go out, I might come in. I'll run and show my activity. [*Runs off.*

SCENE IV.—*The interior of* HEYWOOD'S *Farm.*

MARTIN *discovered, seated.—His Children about him.*

Martin. And this, then, is the end! All's gone!—I cannot carry with me even a hope of better days. Now, indeed, labour will be hard to me, for I shall work with a broken heart. Now, fortune cannot bless me, for she with whom I should have shared all good—but let me think no more of her. Think no more! like a ghost she haunts me. But she has shamed me,—and may she—No, I cannot curse her with her children looking in my face. I will not curse her. I must say farewell to the home where I was born—where I had hoped to die. Oh! as I think of the long past days,—as I sit here staring my last at these walls—those who are now in their graves come gathering about me—faces, that seem a part of the place—that seem as they had never been away,—looks that take me back, and make me a child again. All from then till now is like a dream—the things of my boyhood alone seem real:—all else is—

Rachel. (*Without.*) Martin! Martin!

Martin. No, no; that is real—would it were not! (*To* Children: Go, bolt the door.)

Boy. Why, it is my mother. I must not shut the door against my mother.

Martin. No—I had forgot. A good child; you must not.

[*The boy opens the door*

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Rachel. (*Entering.*) Martin! dear Martin!

Martin. Rachel, if you can look in my face, and do not sink with shame, can you look on these?

Rachel. Shame!—you are deceived.

Martin. I have been: so deceived, that had a voice from the sky called you what it tears my heart to think of, I would not have listened to it. But these eyes—these eyes!—oh! that I had been blind!

Rachel. You never loved me if you will not hear me.

Martin. Never loved you! It was that love that smoothed all trouble to me. It was that love, that, when all men,—fortune—seemed set against me, cheered me on, and put a strength into my heart,—that made me smile as I would think—well, let all go, let all else fail me, there is one who'll never change—there is one who is as good, as constant as the angels. Poverty came upon me—the blow was sudden and unkind—still I thought, though we have but a crust, we'll share that crust together—though our bed be straw, that bed shall bear us both!—As you say, I am deceived.

Rachel. Hear me, Martin; then judge me as you will.

Martin. That man—that devil, whom they put here—would his blood were on my hearth!—did he not tempt you?

Rachel. He did.

Martin. With gold—filthy gold? He came into the poor man's house—bought that which I thought worlds could never buy—robbed me of my wife, these children of their mother.

Rachel. Martin, may you be pardoned that thought! It is true that man showed me gold—dared to speak—to seize me,—but I cast his money in the dust, I tore myself from his arms,—

Martin. His arms! Woman! I would not kill you.

Rachel. I fled and hid myself—listened to a plan of murder and ran to the mansion.

Martin. I found you there, coming from his chamber.

Rachel. I knew not the man. 'Twas to save his life. Upon my soul I speak the truth.

Martin. A lie—a foul lie!

Rachel. The truth, or may I die at your feet. Oh, Martin! can you think thus of me,—after the years—the happy years? Or am I become tiresome to you, and so with this excuse you'd—

Martin. Excuse! Are these tears an excuse,—these trembling limbs, these scalded eyes, this broken heart?

[*Sinks into chair.*

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Enter SAILOR.

Sailor. (*Speaking at door.*) Now, master, if you're for starting, we shall sail in an hour. Here's a whole crew of neighbours, too, coming to take leave of you. (*Disappears from door.*)

Rachel. Martin!

Martin. I have accepted the place abroad, to tend to an estate, and—and—overlook the slaves. I leave the farm—the country, this day.

Rachel. The children?—

Martin. They go with me.

Rachel. And I, Martin—I?

Martin. Go where you will,—may you be happy.

Rachel. My children! Use me as you please—but my babes! —Oh, Martin! what madness is upon you? Hear me! You shall hear me. If it must be so, think not of me as your wife; but have mercy on the mother of your children!

Martin. I love them, Rachel.

Rachel. Dearly, very dearly; but not like a mother.

Martin. Bid them farewell, for they must go.

Rachel. But not without me! Children, pray to your father—pray to him I must not call my husband!

Martin. Rachel, this is wild and useless. Be calm and give them up.

Rachel. I tell you I shall go mad—raving mad—to lose my children! Take me with them. I do not ask you to speak to me, to look at me;—let me work with the slaves you speak of; —let me die, so as I die not from my children!

[*Faints, and falls over the knee of* MARTIN—*the* Children *surrounding her.*

Enter BEANSTALK, POLLY, DAME, NEIGHBOURS, *and* SAILOR.

Beanst. Why, Martin, and bee'st thee really going? Why, what's the matter with thee wife?

Polly. Bless me, Rachel! (*They bear her to the back.*)

Martin. Farmer, farewell; neighbours, heaven bless you!— Let the landlord take all the rest,—this chair,—my grandfather's chair,—I'll bear with me.

Enter BULLFROG *and two* RUSTICS *at door.*

Bullf. Not a splinter of it, as I'm a sworn appraiser.

Martin. I do not wish to hurt you, man; but do not strive to prevent me.

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Bullf. Must'nt move a stick, Mr. Heywood. Business is business.

Martin. I tell you this chair shall with me. Let him who dare, lay a finger on it.

Bullf. Business is business. I seize in the king's name.

Martin. Then you must fight for it. (*Strikes* BULLFROG, *who seizes the chair with the* Rustics. *The* Neighbours *assist* MARTIN, *exclaiming,* "Down with them!" *In the struggle, the back of the chair is pulled off, when out fall loose gold, small money-bags and a paper.*)

All. Gold! Money!

Bullf. I seize in the king's name!

Beanst. (*Throwing him aside.*) What be this? (*Taking up paper.*) Your grandfather's name.

Martin. (*Takes paper, glances at it, endeavouring to read it, and then returns it to* BEANSTALK.) Read! read!

Beanst. (*Reads.*) "*Should any sudden accident light upon me, so that I be not able to tell my last wishes, let this certify, that the three hundred guineas, hidden with this paper, in my walnut chair, be the rightful property of Martin and Tobias Heywood, my grandsons. Signed, Thomas Heywood.*" This is rare Martin! I give thee joy! (Neighbours *shout.*)

Martin. I shall keep the farm!—ha!—ha!—I shall keep the farm!

Enter GRANTLEY *at door.*

Grant. Where is Master Heywood?

Martin. Come not here, man—come not here!

Grant. Be calm. I have injured you—in thought, I mean. All your neighbours praise you for an honest, upright man. I thought you the companion of scoundrels. But for your wife whose devotedness I had wronged, I had fallen their victim. She came to save me——

Toby. (*Without.*) Come along, rascal. Stand out of the way!

Enter TOBY, *dragging in* CRUMBS. Servant *following, carrying a box.*

Crumbs. Villain! why am I thus used?

Toby. (*To* GRANTLEY.) Here is the rascal, sir. You know we found that box among the laurel trees. Luckily, you took my advice, and let it rest. We watched, and as I expected, the thief came creeping down to carry away the spoil. We pounced upon him,—here he is, and here's his plunder.

Grant. What answer make you to this?

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Crumbs. None to you. I shall make a clear answer to Mr. Robert Grantley.

Grant. Then speak. Robert Grantley is before you. What! you shrink?—I had heard of your oppression. I wrote for further sums of money, and then, under a feigned character, came to witness the means you'd take to answer the demand. Fie upon you! My father left you to husband my estate; it was your duty to check my extravagance, not feed it. And now you add to your iniquity by wholesale theft. What say you to this?

Crumbs. Robert Grantley,—since you are he,—listen. At the mansion you saw a certain picture. You remember you asked me whose it was? I'll tell you. It was the likeness of a young and once virtuous wife. A devil, a golden devil, dazzled her vain heart, and she left her husband and disgraced him. That husband plunged in vice to fly from thought. He gamed, robbed, and was devoted to the thief's reward—the gallows. He escaped, and fled abroad. Years passed away. In a foreign land he met his wife's destroyer, who, knowing not the man he had wronged, fostered him—took him to his heart—made him his man of trust, and brought him to England. He died, and left him to manage his estate for his wild and absent son. Robert Grantley, that man was your father; the picture is the picture of his victim; I—I was her wronged and broken-hearted husband!

Grant. Can it be?

Crumbs. My purpose was to beggar you—to revenge me on the father, in his dearest part, his darling son!

Grant. Your injuries were great; yet how could your malice survive the author of your wrongs?

Crumbs. That picture? I have stood and looked at it,—in the still night I have gazed on it, until I have thought the devil himself looked from its eyes, and smiled upon my purpose. That picture, and the recollection that those cursed walls received my wife when she fled from her home, and left me to seek companions with the vile and infamous—Oh! I am an old man!—but there are injuries so cut within the heart, so burnt within the brain, that with the heart and brain must live and die together. Enough. Now, for my gaol.

Grant. No; I pardon you: nay, more; will provide for you.

Crumbs. Never. I scorn and spit at you.—Am I free?

[STEPHEN *and others bring in* SILVER JACK *and* HYSSOP, *bound.*

Stephen. Here are the thieves! (*To* GRANTLEY.) I was told you were here, sir, and so here I've brought them. Bob, the

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carter here, saw them on the road, and, knowing our cattle, gave the cry; they were soon unhorsed, and here they are, ready trussed for the gibbet. We found these few matters on them. (*Showing dice, cards, picklocks, &c.*) And here's something folded up. (*Gives paper to* GRANTLEY.)

Grant. What is this?—(*Reading bill.*) "Escaped from Newgate—John Harris!"—Who can this mean?

Crumbs. The man your father robbed! Read, and see what time and he have made of him. I took ten guineas from a rich usurer, and was condemned for Tyburn. Your father stole the wife of my bosom, and lived a wealthy, charitable gentleman,—had the respect of all while on the earth, and a lying tombstone when under it! May I leave now? (GRANTLEY *assents.*)

[CRUMBS *looks fiercely round him, exchanges a look of contempt with* JACK *and* HYSSOP, *and rushes off.*

Jack. Perhaps we're intruding: may we leave too?

Grant. Away with them, and keep them for the present.

Steph. They deserve hanging if it's only for the lies they told about Master Heywood's wife. Why, they've been laughing over it as a good joke,—(JACK *and* HYSSOP *laugh.*)—that they tried to make Martin jealous, that he might save them the sin of blowing out your brains. Oh! you rascal!—your hanging-day will be a rare holiday thirty miles round.

[STEPHEN, *&c., take* JACK *and* HYSSOP *off.*

Martin. Rachel! can I be forgiven? I dare not look at you.

[RACHEL *falls into his arms.*

Toby. I don't wonder at that. He's a poor wizard whom every fool can drive mad. Suspect Rachel! why, if we weren't all made so happy with our grandfather's gold, I'd turn boy again, and thrash you myself. Here was Bullfrog trying to disturb me and my wife.

Bullf. Wife!

Toby. Yes. I shall never know what to do with my part of the money, so I must have a wife, to get her advice about it. I hope you've no objection?

Bullf. None, (*Aside.*) as the money's not on the other side. But business is business; you'll want furniture: I have the sweetest four-post bedstead you ever looked upon.

Martin. (*To* GRANTLEY.) I have now, sir, to ask your pardon. Can you excuse the passion of an oppressed—

Grant. Nay, it is I who have to ask forgiveness of you, and of all my tenants; that I have suffered them to be the victims of a mercenary agent. I will, henceforth, reside on my lands; and, by my future care, endeavour to remedy the injuries com-

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mitted by my servant. To your wife, Heywood, I probably owe my existence. This farm has, I hear, been in your family for sixty years: may it remain so while the country stands! To-morrow shall give you a freeholder's right to it.

Neighbours, &c. Huzza! Huzza!

Bullf. Well, this is capital. (*Aside.*) I see I'm future steward to that young man. But still I have to say one thing. Friendship and generosity are very well; but—(*To* MARTIN.) now, it doesn't concern you,—you're a freeholder: all of us here aren't so lucky: therefore, as business is business, I trust nobody here will forget THE RENT DAY.

END OF "THE RENT DAY."

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NELL GWYNNE;

OR,

THE PROLOGUE.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

King Charles the Second		Mr. Jones.
Sir Charles Berkeley		Mr. Forester
Charles Hart	Managers of the King's Theatre, Drury Lane, 1667.	Mr. Durueet.
Major Mohun		Mr. Perkins.
Betterton	Manager of the Duke's Theatre, Lincoln's-inn	Mr. Diddear.
Joe Haynes		Mr. Meadows.
Counsellor Crowsfoot		Mr. Blanchard.
Stockfish		Mr. F. Matthews.
Boy		Master Macdonald.
Nell Gwynne		Miss Taylor.
Orange Moll		Mr. Keeley.
Mrs. Snowdrop		Mrs. Daly.

*** *This Comedy was first represented on the 9th of January*, 1833.

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WHILST we may safely reject as unfounded gossip many of the stories associated with the name of Nell Gwynne, we cannot refuse belief to the various proofs of kindheartedness, liberality, and—taking into consideration her subsequent power to do harm—absolute goodness of a woman mingling—(if we may believe a passage in Pepys,)—from her earliest years in the most depraved scenes of a most dissolute age. The life of Nell Gwynne, from the time of her connexion with Charles the Second, to that of her death, proved that error had been forced upon her by circumstances, rather than indulged from choice. It was under this impression that the present little Comedy was undertaken: under this conviction an attempt has been made to show some glimpses of the "silver lining" of a character, to whose influence over an unprincipled voluptuary, we owe a national asylum for veteran soldiers, and whose brightness shines with the most amiable lustre in many actions of her life, and in the last disposal of her worldly effects.

Nell Gwynne first attended the theatre as an orange-girl. Whether she assumed the calling, in order to attract the notice of Betterton—who, it is said, on hearing her recite and sing, discouraged her hopes of theatrical eminence—or whether her love of the stage grew from her original trade of playhouse fruit girl, has not yet been clearly shown. Indeed, nothing certain can be gathered of her parentage or place of birth: even her name has, lately, been disputed. That from "the pit she mounted to the stage," is, however, on the poetic testimony of Rochester, indisputable:—

> 'The orange basket her fair arm did suit,
> Laden with pippins and Hesperian fruit;
> This first step raised, to the wond'ring pit she sold
> The lovely fruit, smiling with streaks of gold.
> Fate now for her did its whole force engage,
> And from the pit she mounted to the stage;
> There in full lustre did her glories shine,
> And, long eclips'd, spread forth their light divine;
> There Hart and Rowley's soul she did ensnare,
> And made a king a rival to a player."

She spoke a new prologue to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight*

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of the Burning Pestle: she afterwards played *Queen Almahide* in Dryden's *Conquest of Grenada*, besides speaking the prologue "in a broad-brimmed hat and waste belt." The history of this hat is given by old Downes, the prompter, in his valuable *Roscius Anglicanus*, a chance perusal of which first suggested the idea of this drama.

All the characters in the comedy, with but two exceptions, and allowing the story that the first lover of Nell was really an old lawyer, figured in the time of Charles the Second. For the introduction of *Orange Moll* (so inimitably acted by Mr. Keeley), the author pleads the authority of Pepys, who, in the following passage, proves the existence and notoriety of some such personage :—"It was observable how a gentleman of good habit sitting just before us, eating of some fruit in the midst of the play, did drop down as dead, being choked; but with much art Orange Mal did thrust her finger down his throat, and brought him to life again." In another place Pepys speaks of Sir W. Penn and himself having a long talk with "Orange Mal." A dramatic liberty has been taken with the lady's name, Moll being thought more euphonic than "Mal" or "Matilda." The incident of the king supping at a tavern with Nell, and finding himself without money to defray the bill, is variously related in the Chroniques Scandaleuses of his "merry" and selfish days.

D. J.

Little Chelsea, July 17, 1883.

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NELL GWYNNE;

OR,

THE PROLOGUE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—NELL GWYNNE'S *Lodgings.*

Enter MRS. SNOWDROP, *followed by* JOE HAYNES.

Mrs. S. Mr. Haynes, do you know what character is?

Haynes. I do, Mrs. Snowdrop, in all its varieties; 'tis at the best an ostentatious superfluity. Character! That may be called our first year of discretion in which we learn to live without it.

Mrs. S. 'Tis just like you of the King's Play-house.

Haynes. Nay, I'm no longer of the King's Play-house; they've cast me out of the community.

Mrs. S. Cast out!—For what?

Haynes. My religion. T'other day, I sent a ship-parson with a bell to call manager Hart and his actors to prayers: the manager swore at my piety, and straight discharged me: I'm a martyr of the last new make: if one day Joe Haynes be not in the calendar, then do they manufacture saints as we make knights; not from desert, but court favour. My sanctity brings me to my errand. This girl—Mistress Ellen Gwynne—

Mrs. S. Poor thing! I do believe she has hardly a friend in the world.

Haynes. I'm a benefactor on a grand scale—I mean my Lord Buckhurst—

Mrs. S. But then she has a heart for a queen.

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Haynes. And an ankle for Venus, no doubt. When shall we see her?

Mrs. S. Pretty Nelly, she's quite a lamb. Could I but see her well married; could I but discover an honest man—

Haynes. Ay, but only think of the uncertainty.

Mrs. S. A plain-going citizen—

Haynes. Plain-going! Where will you find one? unless, indeed, you count among the livery the wooden men of St. Dunstan's? Since Charles hath come back, the city hath grown ashamed of its plainness, and stands begging at Whitehall for cast-off ruffs and feathers. Now, my Lord Buckhurst—

Mrs. S. You see, Mr. Haynes, I'm a lone widow with nothing left but my reputation.

Haynes. Poor destitute thing!

Mrs. S. And though I do let lodgings, my husband, Balaam Snowdrop, was once very high as a Roundhead.

Haynes. (*Aside:* Thrice very high—and each time in the pillory.)

Mrs. S. Nay, would you believe it, closely concerned with Barebones?

Haynes. I can easily believe it—(*Aside:* since he married you.) But for Mistress Gwynne, something must be done to fix her fortunes?

Mrs. S. So she said last night. You see, she has run away from a lady whose companion she was, because she wouldn't listen to some lawyer man, old and ugly no doubt: dear Nelly, she is such a kind-hearted thing!

Haynes. But last night?

Mrs. S. Well, last night, as I was saying, she made me—the Lord knows against my will—but then she smiled so, and bade me take a mouthful of strong waters, for I had been thinking of my dear Balaam, and—

Haynes. Damn Balaam!—No, I abhor unnecessary swearing; —pass Balaam, and come to Nelly. What was't she made you do?

Mrs. S. Carry a letter to the Duke's Play-house, to Mr. Manager Betterton.

Haynes. To what end?

Mrs. S. To ask him to come and hear her read play-books. You may well look; nothing now will serve her but to go upon the stage. 'Tisn't my fault: I'm sure I put the pious Mr. Muggleton under her pillow every night.

Haynes. And Betterton?

Mrs. S. He's with her now: they have been doing what they call a scene; but you may be sure I was present: and there

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Nelly played the queen of—of—I forget what,—but she talked of racks, and daggers, and poisons, and cutting off people's heads,—oh, if she'd been born a queen, it couldn't have come more natural to her!

Haynes. A heroine ready made for Dryden!

Mrs. S. And then to see how beautifully she faints—and how in a minute she'll drown her face with tears! I've known hundreds of women try as much, but none like Nelly. And then she sings—sings, as if nightingales—

(NELL GWYNNE *is heard to sing without.*)

"My lodging it is on the cold ground,
And very hard is my fare,
But that which troubles me most, is
The unkindness of my dear.
Yet still I cry, Oh, turn, love,
And I prythee, love, turn to me;
For thou art the man that I long for,
And, alack! what remedy?"

Haynes. Sings! If that voice do not fill a pit—do not lead the gallants by the ears;—we must see her. Eh! here's Betterton; stand aside—(*puts* MRS. SNOWDROP *off.*) Now, for the humility of a cast-off actor to a manager in full play.

Enter BETTERTON.

Mr. Betterton, your most humble servant.

Bet. What, Joe! again on the world? Why, man, how dost live?

Haynes. Live, sir?—by hand and knife: one night I pick a pocket, the next I cut a throat. I have a consuming desire to end my life at the gallows!

Bet. May your desires be gratified! But why, Joe, at the gallows?

Haynes. I'd fain cast discredit on the rest of the players. My dying speech shall be a second Cromwell to you, and turn your theatres to conventicles; and as the stage first saw the light in the wagon of Thespis, so shall it close its eyes in the Tyburn cart of Joseph Haynes.

Bet. Nay, cheat the hangman, and spare us. But I shall be late at rehearsal. [*Going.*

Haynes. Mr. Betterton. So, you are going to fire the town with another Helen?

Bet. On my life, no.

Haynes. Come, you managers are so close. Have you no wonder?—No speaking doll from France?—No new treble from

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Italy?—Have you shipped no unicorn—set no bird-trap for the phœnix?

Bet. 'Twixt ourselves, Davenant is about to cut down, and put music to Othello, to make it pass for a night or two.

Haynes. Music to Othello, cut down! I see; he takes away the golden wires of Apollo, and puts in their place his own cat-gut.

Bet. Nay, Davenant has improved Shakspeare; in fact, made some of the bard's plays his own.

Haynes. Yes; as the Grand Turk makes prisoners his own—by mutilation. But have you no new actress? Come, there's the syren in this house?

Bet. She! phoo—raw, quite raw!

Haynes. Hang it! 'tis said she's very beautiful.

Bet. Humph!

Haynes. And sings like——

Bet. All women sing—good morning.

Haynes. You'll repent your judgment.

Bet. 'Tis the cry of every one I refuse: repentance with me, as with yourself, Joe, is late coming; for I have had no qualms as yet. Farewell, Joe; and, hark ye, have pity on the poor actors, and eschew hanging.

Haynes. But if I persist, I shall at least have at my execution, what hath long been a rarity at the Duke's Play-house.

Bet. What's that?

Haynes. A full audience.

Bet. A merry one, I warrant.

Haynes. Not so: my death, like your new comedies, will raise the price of pocket-handkerchiefs.

Bet. Farewell, mad Joe.

Haynes. Farewell, reasonable Tom. (*Exit* BETTERTON.) And now, if it be possible, to get an interview with Mistress Nelly.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Show-room in the house of* MADAME CHARRETT, *Milliner, Covent Garden: various articles of female dress displayed on stands.*

Discovered, KING CHARLES *sitting, looking off into another room; he is plainly habited.* SIR CHARLES BERKELEY, *waiting.*

Char. Well done, Madame Charrett! That's the tenth letter exchanged within half the number of minutes. Why, Berkeley, this is no milliner's, but the post-office.

Berk. Madame's establishment combines the two. I told your majesty, that—

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Char. Softly, Berkeley; milliners have ears. Look there! another! Didst ever see so insidious a bit of paper? Sealed with a stag, I warrant me. Bravo! another! That's from a courtier; long, narrow, and scented; a very musk-rat of epistles. That's from an alderman's wife; with wax enough on't for the privy seal. If the Stationers' Company do not give Madame Charrett their freedom, commerce is dead to gratitude.

Berk. Your majesty, as I live there's Ned Kynaston, the actor!

Char. And there! yes—he, the rope-dancer! Od'sfish! his name? Jacob Hall! Ha! ha!

Berk. And letters for each!

Char. A golden Jacob, now, to know the writers!

Berk. Some dry-salter's wife.

Char. Tut, man! I'll be sworn, maids of honour at the least. 'Twas but last week I met a certain young countess in the Mall: she had in her coach, as she said, a country maiden, a poor curate's daughter, all bashfulness and blushes. As we talked, up came my lady's short-sighted lord: to him she told the self-same story; when his lordship said he had ever loved the clergy; chucked the fluttering damsel under the chin, and went his way to play a match at bowls. Now, who dost think the maiden really was?

Berk. A curate's daughter.

Char. Ned Kynaston, the actor, fresh from the play-house, drest in his woman's clothes! Ha! ha! Why, who comes here?

Berk. 'Tis the old counsellor.

Char. Old, indeed! Where has he left his scythe and hour-glass?

Berk. Madame's house, as I told your majesty, is an office for stray doves. The counsellor comes, as I hear, to learn about a runaway, a pretty wench.

Char. A pretty wench?

Berk. One Nell Gwynne.

Char. Nell Gwynne! and who is she?

Berk. A girl, 'tis said, of wit and spirit, who took fright at the counsellor's wrinkles; ran from the man of law as from a Russian frost. Your majesty may see some sport.

Char. If the knave do not know me?

Berk. But condescend to remain my cousin, new from the country—for the tale has served with Madame Charrett—and we may outface his knowledge, even if he have any.

Enter COUNSELLOR CROWSFOOT, *from back.*

Good morning, Counsellor.

Crows. (*Aside:* Sparks here!)

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Char. Is't not a shame?

Crows. Shame! What's a shame?

Char. That Nestor should have a tooth for sugar-plums. Have you found her, sir; or has poor Madame Charrett been led astray by a false description? Were her eyes meltingly blue?

Berk. Or piercingly black?

Char. Or had she one or two?

Berk. Did her locks shame the raven's wing?

Char. Or the robin's throat?

Berk. Did she swim like Venus?

Char. Or limp like her spouse? Or, after all, art certain 'tis really a woman whom you seek?

Crows. Humph! a grave man cannot enter a house for business—

Berk. Business! Oh, a suit at law for Madame Charrett!

Char. Some one hath libelled the milliner's last new skirt, or pirated the architecture of the pocket-holes!—Business with the milliner! Come, Rhadamanthus, what business?

Crows. Cannot give an order for a few ruffles and neck-bands—

Berk. Certainly, ruffles and neck-bands!

Char. Yes, the counsellor looks as though his errand was for muslin. (*Aside to* BERKELEY: I hear the rustling of a petticoat. Can it be to old Bracton here? let's watch.)

Berk. Counsellor, may you one day be lord chancellor!

Char. And so, exercise a care for widows and orphans! that is—for ruffles and neck-bands!

[CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *retire at back.*

Crows. Coxcombs! Sugar-sops! They're gone, though. The milliner takes my money, and gives me nought but promises. Hang the girl! To slip through my fingers when I thought she would relent; to be gulled at my age! Madame Charrett promised to come—said she had—

[NELL GWYNNE *heard without.*

Nell. Very well, madam: I'll just take one peep at the silks.

Crows. Why, it is Nelly! As I am a lawyer, her very voice takes forty years from my back! Stay—she sha'n't see me at first, lest she fly off again. This gown may serve me. Oh, Nelly! Nelly!

[CROWSFOOT *hides himself behind one of the gowns, which he wraps about him.*

Enter NELL GWYNNE.

Nell. Dear heart! why what a world of silk and lace! How

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beautiful! If it isn't enough to turn one's head to look at it. But I mus'n't stop. No! Mr. Betterton gave me no hopes: and now nothing is left me but the play and the orange-basket. Well, that with honesty and my good spirits may serve me yet; —for I have a thought that I shall yet surprise 'em—that I shall yet shine upon the stage—that I shall—(*turning to gown, which hides the* COUNSELLOR)—why, bless me! what a pretty gown!—Now, if I had money, this gown, above all other gowns, I'd buy. What a damask! what a flow of skirt! How I should love this gown!

Crows. (*Discovering himself.*) You shall have the gown!

Nell. Ha! (*Screaming and running away.*)

Crows. Don't I tell you, you shall have the gown.

Nell. Yes, sir, but then it must be without the lining.

Crows. Now, Nelly, let me plead—

Nell. Nay, if you're for pleading, put the gown on again. I'm sure 'tis fitter for you than your own.

Crows. Nelly, Nelly, art not shocked to look at me?

Nell. Oh, sir! I always was.

Crows. Why didst run away from the lady?

Nell. Because I could not honestly listen to the gentleman.

Crows. Come, thou hast known me long, and must love me.

Nell. La, sir! I've known the giants at Guildhall still longer, yet care not a pin about 'em.

Crows. Giants, my dear? I am no giant.

Nell. No, sir!

Crows. I—I confess—I'm not in the veriest flower of my days: what then?—Still I am gay and flourishing—green and cheerful like the holly at Christmas.

Nell. To be sure, sir, and the holly is very well;—but—I—I prefer the misletoe.

Crows. A challenge to battle!

Nell. Not to you.—Your age exempts you from service.

Crows. Now, Nelly; thou wouldst not throw my years in my face?

Nell. Why should I? Are they not there already?

Crows. Hast thou no gratitude?—and is not love the same?

Nell. Oh dear, no!—Gratitude's a snowball; love's a fire; make 'em meet, and they kill one another.

Crows. Now, Nelly! dear Nelly,—od's life! I do doat to look in your eyes.

Nell. It says much for your courage.

Crows. How, love?—how?

Nell. Because you must see yourself there.

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Crows. Come, where hast been, Nelly?—Unprotected in this wicked town? Thou shouldst not be alone.

Nell. I've thought so some time, sir.

Crows. Thou'rt a lily that needs support.—What think you of a husband?

Nell. Think, sir? (*Aside:* Now I'll tease him!) Why, a good husband above all things—

Crows. Yes! yes!

Nell. But good husbands are so scarce.

Crows. You may light on a husband,—kind—good.

Nell. I am sure of that.

Crows. What, then?—after all, 'tis a match?—You have found the man?

Nell. Yes, sir; and married him last week.

Crows. Married!

Nell. 'Twas such a thing to be unprotected in this wicked town.

Crows. Last week!

Nell. And being a lily needing support, I took for a prop—

Crows. The furies!

Nell. A handsome young mercer of Bishopsgate.

Crows. Come, you jest, Nelly;—let me beg—see me on my knees, asking for—— [CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *come down.*

Char. Ruffles and neck-bands! Thou piece of jaundiced parchment! thou antique edition of the criminal laws!

Crows. Sirrah! this abuse—the law!

Char. You say well, the law! Doctors' commons, sir!

Berk. A man of your cloth and years!

Char. With my own wife, too!

Nell. } Wife?
Crows. }

Char. I am her injured husband. Can you deny it?

Crows. I know not as for husband; certainly, you look the mercer.

Char. See I do not furnish you with a neck-band. And you, Nelly! Oh, Nelly! Nelly!

Nell. (*Aside:* Hang the fellow!—his impudence is charming.)

Char. After one week! What will they say of us in Bishopsgate Without?—with such a leaf of black-letter, too?—old, torn and dog's-eared?

Berk. A title page of the statutes, with nothing left but the date?

Char. A collection of flaws, and each one fatal to a suit in love? But come, Nelly, let's kiss and be friends—we'll go home.

Nell. Home! (*Aside:* Well, let me get from my old perse-

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cutor, I warrant me I'll trick my new gallant.) As you will, love; I came to Madame Charrett's about the—the—rose-coloured satin. What is to be the price, dear?

Char. Why, when madame deals, cost price. (CROWSFOOT *approaches.*) Old gentleman, freeze in one spot; or by the honour of the Mercer's Company, I'll send you to practise in the courts below!

Crows. But, Nelly!—can it be?

Char. Doubt, and thou diest. Nelly! (*Introducing her.*) Mistress Ellen Tissue, of the—the—

Nell. Golden Lamb—

Char. Bishopsgate Without. Velvets, new from Genoa, lace from France, and—

Nell. Ruffles and neck-bands at the lowest charge.

Char. (*To* CROWSFOOT, *who follows.*) Back, old Parr!—"Gregory (*to* BERKELEY), out with thy blade!" If that Icelander——

Crows. Icelander!

Char. Move a foot,—like a good citizen, cry, *Domine dirige nos!*—and make thy sword hilts knock against his short ribs. [*Exit with* NELL.

Crows. But it's a lie—I know it's a lie!

Berk. What! A lie to a liveryman! (*drawing.*) 'Twould make the dagger leap from the city arms.

Crows. I am a lawyer—and—a—counsellor!

Berk. Be moderate; seek not to add to their great profits the trade of sheep-stealer.

Crows. Sheep-stealer!

Berk. Touch not our golden lamb! As a counsellor, thou mayst in time hope to carry off the woolsack; but lay no finger on the fleecy hosiery of Bishopsgate Without. Back, back, I say! [*Exit* BERKELEY, CROWSFOOT *following.*

SCENE III.—*Exterior of Drury Lane Theatre, in* 1667.

Enter CHARLES.

Char. Od'sfish! she didn't sink through the earth or take flight over the house tops; yet, as I'm a Christian king, know I not how or where the baggage went. What an eye she has! the pair worth the crown jewels. I must put Berkeley on the scent.

Enter BERKELEY.

That girl—did she pass you?

Berk. What! escaped, your majesty?

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Char. No hawk could be more certain of its swoop than I, when she glided through my hands like quicksilver, and left me to look at where she stood. Berkeley, you must find her.

Berk. A few golden words, your majesty, to Madame Charrett, and the game is ours. I left the old counsellor swearing most devoutly for revenge. It seems he would fain marry Nelly in earnest.

Char. That would be revenge indeed. Be it our paternal care to stay such vengeance. To the milliner's, Berkeley! You will find me in the playhouse. Is not this one of the rogues?

Berk. One of your majesty's most impudent servants, Joseph Haynes.

Enter HAYNES.

Char. What, Joe! hast a holiday to-day?

Haynes. Your majesty——

Char. Hush, man. Let my majesty rest with your modesty. Why art not playing the fool inside?

Haynes. Sir, I have become serious, and been turned from the troop.

Char. Serious, varlet! what, your tailor cries out for payment, and the mistress of the Roebuck points to the score?

Haynes. For the tailor, sir, he is nought. Morality forbids me to pay him.

Char. Ay, how so?

Haynes. Tailors were brought into the world by sin: *ergo*, to pay a tailor, is to respect the origin of tailors. A tailor I never pay.

Char. A sound, doctrinal reason. What is acted here to-day?

Haynes. Something of Dryden's, your majesty; as full of heroics, as its dedication is full of——

Char. Lies. (*To* BERKELEY.) Poor John! he soars and flatters with equal genius. Such poets are like the snake in the Indian mythology; they not only fly but creep. Learn directly why this fellow has been discharged, and let me know. Berkeley, be vigilant; I shall wait for you. [*Exit.*

Berk. Call on me to-morrow, and I will hear your story.

Haynes. If it shall please your lordship, now. 'Tis easily told.

Berk. But not heard. To-morrow, or—next day—or—next week.

Haynes. His majesty said directly.

Berk. Which, translated from the vulgar, means one's easiest leisure. [*Exit.*

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Haynes. Even so. Yet 'twill be a rare triumph over manager Hart, to go back under the royal seal; ticketted from Whitehall. Now to Lord Buckhurst; yet with poor hopes.—Nelly was not to be seen; had left the house; followed, it may be, turnspit Betterton. [*Retires.*

Enter CROWSFOOT.

Crows. A great thought! ha! ha!

Haynes. (*Aside:* Here's a lawyer merry—alack! for his clients.)

Crows. Let me see; four or five sturdy fellows, with a cool head to direct 'em; a trustworthy—(HAYNES *comes down.*)—What! Joe Haynes of the King's?

Haynes. Late of that establishment, Counsellor Crowsfoot.

Crows. Late!

Haynes. Late, sir. I am destitute. If necessity, and not Joe Haynes, pick a pocket, I hope I may find a friend at the sessions?

Crows. (*Aside:* He's the very man!) Joe, in all thy pranks, didst ever commit a robbery?

Haynes. Never. Yet I have quick natural parts, and (*bowing*) with an example before me, I might flourish.

Crows. I mean, didst thou ever steal a woman?

Haynes. Steal! bless you, the dear creatures never reduced me to that extremity. Yet if a valued friend——

Crows. Listen. A mad wench, whom I want to send back to her relations—friends of mine, in the country—is at the play-house here, as a fruit girl.

Haynes. It isn't Orange Moll?

Crows. Orange Moll! pshaw!

Haynes. To carry her off would take a troop of horse, with extra trumpets to drown her screams.

Crows. That virago! Will you undertake the job?

Haynes. Alone?

Crows. No, with four or five stout hands, if you know such?

Haynes. I do.

Crows. And trusty?

Haynes. They bear certificates.

Crows. Certificates!

Haynes. Wounds got in the service. They've tasted steel of every kind, from a duke's rapier to a 'prentice's cheese knife.

Crows. Secure the girl—I promise twenty pounds.

Haynes. 'Tis scarce enough. I've known a beating with a poor cudgel fetch five. Indeed, five is the standard price. Sir

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Charles Sedley gave it to the gentleman who licked Ned Kynaston for wearing clothes of the baronet's cut. Five's the market terms.

Crows. And how, as in some cases, if the party's ears are cropped, and his nose slit?

Haynes. Nay, when gentlemen come to extras, 'tis left to their own delicate sense of honour. Well, I'll take your twenty pounds. Now, counsellor, you must confide.—What's the girl's name?

Crows. Ellen; Ellen Gwynne.

Haynes. (*Aside:* So, so—this is Mrs. Snowdrop's lawyer man!) And you'd send her to her relations? Where may they live?

Crows. Oh—Shropshire!

Haynes. And the town? Nay, mutual confidence—Shropshire;—but the town?

Crows. Shrewsbury. I'll be at hand to point her out.

Haynes. Are you sure she goes as a fruit girl?

Crows. Certain. I've just had the news from the milliner who finds the dress. When you have secured the wench——

Haynes. We'll bring her to the Temple—to your chambers.

Crows. Not for the world! I've a consultation there about a case in the ecclesiastical court. Take her to—to the Mitre tavern; my clerk shall be there with the money.

Haynes. The Mitre tavern?

Crows. Yes; the landlord's my client. Besides, the Shropshire wagon passes the house, and can take the girl up. [*Going.*

Haynes. But you'll come to the theatre?

Crows. I'll be there straight.—The Mitre tavern—I shall expect you. [*Exit.*

Haynes. You shall expect me. Now, to earn twenty pounds—cheat a counsellor—and serve my Lord Buckhurst. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Interior of Drury-Lane theatre. The stage forms a space at the back of the pit. A man discovered lighting the candles.*

Enter MAJOR MOHUN *and* HART.

Moh. Upon my life, Hart, something must be done.

Hart. Well, Mohun, isn't there our new play to-morrow, "The Conquest of Grenada?"—That must take the town—and, Major, we have hit upon a thought for the prologue, enough of itself to fill a pit.

Moh. I had a thought, too. What say you if we could get back Goodman?

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Hart. What! after he has turned highwayman?

Moh. That's it: he's quite the fashion. Get him to give the prologue, and advertise that he will appear with the identical pistols with which he robbed the money-broker at Finchley. Depend on't, the pistols would do more than the heroic verse.

Hart. My plan is to have a fling at the other house. Nokes has lately drawn the town, and with what? Forsooth, a huge, broad-brimmed hat! Now, we'll have a hat big as a coach-wheel; and in that hat the prologue shall be spoken. Here it is.

Moh. Why not get Joe Haynes to speak it.

Hart. Haynes! That rogue is the disgrace of our calling.

Enter first party of Visitors *to the Theatre.*

Moh. Well, Charles, take your own way. So! The folks are dropping in.

Hart. As neither you nor I act to-day, suppose we stop here, and like thrifty managers, puff our new play among the audience for to-morrow?

Orange Moll. (*Without.*) Oranges, sweet ladies! Oranges, dear gentlemen!

Moh. There's Orange Molly's gentle voice. How they swarm about the beldam's basket!

Enter Orange Moll, *with orange-basket.* Visitors *follow and continue at intervals to come in, with* Orange Girls.

Moll. Oranges! The true Seville, by my virtue! Buy, buy, my golden Spaniards! Never look, but taste, sweet gentlemen! Fair maidens, buy, and many husbands to you! Come, cavaliers, have none of you a Carolus? Major Mohun, a good house to you! Lovely virgins, make your sweethearts buy, or never say yes for a twelvemonth! Charles Hart, your servant. Will nobody buy my Don Spaniards? Never look as though they were crabs! All sweet! sweet! sweet! Balls of honey! balls of honey, as I'm an honest woman! Will nobody buy of Orange Mary?

Hart. Mary—ha! ha!

Moh. (*To* Hart.) I've known her plain Moll these five-and-twenty years.

Moll. If you have, Major Mohun, keep it to yourself: don't disgrace me with the acquaintance before company. Buy my oranges!

Hart. Why, here comes Betterton.

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Enter BETTERTON.

Moll. Yes, Manager Betterton, of the Duke's—of the Duke's! He *is* a gentleman.

Hart. What, Betterton! Come to spy, or to steal?

Moll. Steal! There's little good he could steal here! No, not even if he was to run off with the managers.

Hart. (*To* MOLL.) The foul fiend's in your tongue. Will you be still?

Moll. As still as Charles Hart's conscience when he has done cruel murder.

Better. Why, when does he murder, Moll?

Moll. Whenever he goes upon the stage, when does he not? And doesn't Charles Hart crow about his family? A descent from Shakspeare!—He may say, descent: from everything to nothing, and a little lower!

Moh. Molly, be silent.

Moll. As silent as little Major Mohun, when the Roundheads broke into the playhouse, and Molly smuggled him out in her basket, under the oranges. To be sure that was no great matter; for who could tell his lily face from one of these? (*Holding up an orange.*) See; between my finger and thumb, here's the little Major! Foul fiend! Whoop! I'll have revenge!

Hart. Why, what wilt do, Molly?

Moll. Do!—do!—I'll (*curtseying to* BETTERTON) go to the other house.

Better. Out, you slut!

Enter CHARLES *and* BERKELEY—*they mix with the* Visitors.

Moll. Slut! I was never slut nor spit at Whitehall. No, nor ever basted from the kitchen for embezzling sops in the pan. Slut! Rogues! I'll write your lives, and give 'em to the pamphlet-sellers! Buy my oranges! Buy my little yellow majors! Slut!

Char. (*Aside to* BERKELEY: The wench is not here. Art sure the milliner is true?)

Berk. My life on't. The girl was to be here with an orange basket.

Moll. (*Coming down to* CHARLES.) Buy my oranges—buy—(*Aside:* His Christian majesty, for all his plain clothes!) Buy my Spaniards! Near neighbours of our blessed queen: buy, or you do not love her majesty.

Char. A plague on this sybil! (*To* BERKELEY: Charles get her off.)

[BERKELEY *engages* MOLL. HART *and* MOHUN *come down.*

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Hart. His majesty!

Char. Not a word. It is my pleasure to remain unknown: see I am not intruded on. (*To* MOHUN.) So, my little Mohun, you have something new to-morrow, is it not so?

Moh. "The Conquest of Grenada," so please your——

Char. We shall attend: ay, and in state. Her majesty may, perhaps, accompany us.

Moll. (*Coming down with* BERKELEY *to* CHARLES.) I'll be judged, if you're no Cavalier, but a Roundhead. I'll take this sweet gentleman for my witness! What! grudge sixpence a piece for my Spaniards? Sixpence for the neighbours of her blessed majesty?

Nell Gwynne sings without. "Buy oranges!"

Berk. (*To* CHARLES.) Madame Charrett is true—'tis she!

Enter NELL GWYNNE, *as* Orange Girl, *with orange-basket. She carries a mask.*

Nell. (*Sings.*) "Buy oranges!" Ladies and cavaliers, vouchsafe to look at my basket! Maidens, ripen my fruit with your glances: buy my oranges, as bright as hope and as sweet as courtship.—Though they look as hard as gold, they'll melt in the mouth like a lover's promise.—Their juice is syrup, and their coats as thin as a poet's. Buy, gentlemen; or I'll vow that, being jealous, you hate yellow, even in an orange. [*Goes up.*

Moll. What pert minikin's this, with its lavender slip-slop?

Better. (*Aside:* It is—I'd swear to her face—the very girl!)

Char. (*Coming down with* NELLY.) And have your oranges really all these virtues?

Nell. (*Aside:* So, my gallant mercer.) All, and a thousand more;—there's nothing good that may not be said of the orange. It sets special examples to elder brothers, misers, and young travellers.

Char. Ay? What example to elder brothers?

Nell. This: though of full age, it dwells quietly on the same branch with bud and blossom.

Char. What doth it teach misers?

Nell. That golden coats should cover melting hearts.

Char. And, lastly, what may the young traveller learn of your orange?

Nell. This much; that he is shipped when green, that he may ripen on the voyage.

Char. Prettily lectured.

Moll. Prettily! well, before I'd talk such snip-snip, as though my mouth was a button-hole cut in French muslin, I'd go in

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mourning for my tongue, and sew up my lips with black worsted!

Hart. (*To* MOLL.) Silence, Sycorax! (*To* MOHUN.) This is the girl for our prologue.

Better. (*Aside:* The king seems dazzled with this wench.—I must secure her for the Duke's.)

Nell. But, gentlemen: fair gentlemen;—will no one lighten my basket? Buy my oranges!

Song.—NELL GWYNNE.

Buy oranges!—No better sold—
New brought in Spanish ships;
As yellow bright as minted gold,
As sweet as ladies' lips.
Come, maidens, buy; nor judge my fruit
From beauty's bait—the skin;
Nor think, like fops, with gaudy suit,
They're dull and crude within.
Buy oranges.

Buy, oranges!—Buy courtiers, pray,
And as ye drain their juice,
Then, cast the poor outside away,
A thing that's served its use;
Why, courtier, pause; this truth translate
Imprinted in the rind;
However gay the courtier's state,
'Tis yet of orange kind.
Buy oranges!

Buy oranges!—Coquetting fair,—
A sweet reproach come buy;
And, as the fruit ye slice and share,
Remember with a sigh—
A heart divided needs must cast
The faith which is its soul;
If, maidens, ye would have it last,
Give none—if not the whole.
Buy oranges!

[*The bystanders all applaud.*

Moll. Well, ladies,—(*to* Orange Girls)—if we are to be squealed out of our calling by an interloper! (*Imitating* NELL.) "Buy oranges! Buy oranges!" [*All go up.*

Enter CROWSFOOT.

Nell. (*Going towards him.*) Buy my—(*hiding face with mask.* The counsellor!

Crows. Stay, my pretty dear; I want to deal with you.—I want to buy——

Nell. Ruffles, or——

Char. (*Coming down.*) Neck-bands?

Crows. These jackanapes again!—(*Aside:* Where's Haynes?)

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Berk. (*Urging him away.*) Counsellor—counsellor—I've a suit for you, counsellor.

Crows. I want no suit—at my chambers, I——

Berk. Nay, sir, life and death are on't.

Crows. If 'twere your hanging, I wouldn't budge. If you were the king himself I wouldn't move.

Berk. And if you were the lord chief justice, you shouldn't stay.

Crows. An assault—I'll indict!

Berk. Indict,—but come. [*Forces him off.*

Nell. (*Aside:* Now, to make my escape.)

Hart. (*Following* NELL.) If you would but step this way——

Better. (*To* NELL.) Permit me again to wait upon you.

Moh. Mr. Hart and myself are desirous——

Better. Nay, sirs, but I have the first claim.

Hart and Moh. (*Keeping* BETTERTON *from* NELL.) Mr. Betterton! Mr. Betterton!

Nell. Lud, gentlemen! have you found such a jewel, that you must quarrel about it?

Moll. A jewel! A thing for candle-light; else 'twouldn't have a shade like this! (*Snatching mask from* NELL's *hand. To* Orange girls.) Here, ladies! here's a toy for an orange girl! Minx! Buy oranges!

Nell. (*To* CHARLES.) Oh, save me from her tongue!

Char. Trust yourself, my little Pomona, to me: this will take us behind the scenes. Mohun, lead the way.—Nay, come! or that she-devil will raise the house.

Nell. Anywhere, for in truth I fear her nails.

[*Exit with* CHARLES *and* MOHUN.

Hart. (*To* MOLL.) Art not ashamed to rate the young woman?

Moll. Woman? A chit! a baby face! If she's a woman, what am I?

Enter Boy.

Boy. (*To* HART.) Sir, it's the time. Shall the music begin?

Hart. I am coming. This girl must be ours. Come, Betterton.

Better. (*Aside:* What a fool I was to miss her!)

[*Bell rings, and music is heard behind the scenes.*

[*Exit with* HART.

Moll. A woman, forsooth! Why, look ye, ladies; if a mask's to make the difference, let us all be as black as Sandford's perriwig. [*Puts mask to her face, and walks about imitating* NELL.

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Enter HAYNES.

Haynes. The counsellor says, she wears a mask—eh? (*sees* MOLL.) Here she is. My love, I bear a message from a lord—a nobleman—who——

Moll. (*Aside:* He takes me for that doll! A lord! No wonder they called her Pomona. I'll trick her now.)

Haynes. Put your arm through mine. Don't tremble—you are with an honourable gentleman.

[*Music heard behind the scenes.*

Moll. I—I——

Haynes. Not a word. They're going to begin the play. Hark! the music. Let us steal away quietly. Don't flutter—softly—softly—(*Aside:*—and now for the Mitre and the twenty pounds.)

[HAYNES *leads* MOLL *off masked, as visitors take their seats in the pit, and music is heard.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Mitre Tavern.*

Discovered, NELL GWYNNE, CHARLES, *and* BERKELEY, *at table.*

Nell. No, not a minute longer.

Char. Nay, why wilt not take my word?

Nell. I have taken it, and found it counterfeit. The cracked coin doesn't pass a second time.

Char. But—I promise—thou *shalt* go home.

Nell. So you promised when I left the theatre;—how is it that you brought me here?

Char. By accident.

Nell. Accident?

Char. Yes; through gazing on your eyes, I somehow lost my way: I was blinded by light.—Is not the excuse a fair one?

Nell. No; an owl would have made as good.—Farewell.

Char. Stay! we must not part so. Come, Nelly; thou dost not know me.—Now what dost think I am?

Nell. By my troth, you are hardly worth a guess.

Char. Try. What dost take me for?

Nell. An apothecary's 'prentice with just label Latin enough to tell camphor from cinnamon? No: your features are not

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learned enough for that. A money-lender's clerk? Oh no; that face would never get you such a place of trust. A ballad-writer? No; for though your cheek is blank enough for paper, you hav'n't quite a goose-quill look.

Char. Come; will my face fit no honest calling! Say something.

Nell. Well then, in despair I decide. There is a shallow neatness, a sort of brassy glitter in your air that—I know not what you are, if not a pin-maker.

Char. A pin-maker!

Nell. Nay, I've known pin-makers who'd see no compliment in the comparison. But if none of these, what are you?

Char. A gentleman,—upon my word,—a gentleman.

Nell. Is that all? Farewell.

Char. What would you have?—a gentleman and a soldier.

Nell. A soldier!

Char. Even so.—Now will you leave me?

Nell. A soldier! Well, I declare, this quite makes out a dream I had two mornings ago. You shall hear it.

Char. No dreams now: another time.

Nell. Now or never: listen.—I dreamt that I was riding in a fine golden coach with the king.

Char. With the king!

Berk. With the king!

Nell. You know, we do dream such strange things—with the king. Well, the coach stopped; when there came up a poor old soldier without any legs or arms; and of a sudden he held out his hand——

Char. What! without any arms?

Nell. You know, it was only in a dream.

Char. Yes, Nelly; but you ought to dream according to anatomy.

Nell. I say, he held out his hand; and, telling us, that he had no place to lay his old gray head upon, not a morsel of bread to put into his mouth, he begged for charity, while the tears came peeping into the corners of his eyes.

Char. Well?

Nell. I turned round to the king,—for, bless you, I was altogether at my ease, no more afraid of him than I am of you,—and I said, "Charles!"——

Char. Charles!

Berk. Charles!

Nell. "Is it not a shame to let your old soldiers carry about their scars as witnesses of their king's forgetfulness?—is it not cruel that those who for your sake"——

[*Unconsciously laying her hand upon the arm of* CHARLES.

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Char. For my sake?

Nell. You know, I am supposing you the king.

Char. Oh, ay, ay!

Nell. "Who for your sake have left some of their limbs in a strange country, should have no resting-place for the limbs they have, in their own?"

Char. I see the end: the king relieved the soldier, and then you awoke?

Nell. No, I didn't: for I thought the coach went on towards Chelsea, and there——

Char. Well, what happened at Chelsea?

Nell. There, I thought I saw a beautiful building suddenly grow up from the earth; and going in and coming out of it, just like so many bees, heaps of old soldiers, with their long red coats, and three-corner hats, and some with their dear wooden legs, and all with their rough faces looking so happy and contented,—that, when I looked and thought it was all my work, I felt as if I could have kissed every one of 'em round!

Char. When it came to that, of course you awoke!

Nell. No, I didn't; not until I saw a place, with my picture hanging out for a sign. My head for a sign! what do you think of that?

Char. Think?—I can't think of the sign with the living lips before me. (*She avoids him.*) Nay, thou'rt a wild and beautiful bird.

Nell. Ay, he must be a cunning fowler who cages me.

Char. I can make the bars of gold.

Nell. If you'd hold the surer, better bend one of the gold bars into a ring. No other cage, no other knot; a little fable hath taught me wisdom. You shall hear it.

Song.—NELL GWYNNE.

"Little bird, little bird, have a care;"
Thus whisper'd a lark to her child;
"See the fowler is spreading his snare,
What makes ye thus noisy and wild?"
"Good mother," the silly one cried,
Conceitedly trimming its wing,—
"Iv'e beauty and youth on my side,—
Hang fowlers! I'll gambol and sing.
Good mother,
Hang fowlers! I'll gambol and sing."

"Little bird, little bird, not so near;"
In vain! "Now too late you'll regret;"
For the poor little bird, dead with fear,
A captive is ta'en in the net.

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The mother then sighed forth this truth,
Her little one fast in the string,—
" In prisons, what's beauty and youth?
Fear fowlers, nor gambol nor sing."
" Oh, mother!"
" Fear fowlers, nor gambol nor sing!"

Char. I tell thee, Nelly, I am rich, abundantly rich—what dost think now?

Nell. Think!—that faces do not go with fortunes.

Char. Thou shalt be a queen—almost!

Nell. Almost! Saving the coronation and a few such ceremonies.

Char. I'll pour heaps of wealth into your lap; thou shalt be studded with diamonds; thou shalt tread on nothing baser than the richest damasks; music shall float about you; servants shall bow before you; all things shall come with your wish!

Nell. Let me have one now, in earnest of the future.

Char. Name it.

Nell. Home!—Home now, and the damask and music afterwards. I will not be delayed, I insist—

Enter STOCKFISH.

Stock. What cry is this in the Mitre! Did ye call for the bill? [NELL *retires.*

Char. Bill!

Stock. Ye have feasted right lusciously, and here is the account thereof.

Char. (*Aside to* BERKELEY: Pay this puritanical bagpipe.)

Berk. (*Aside to* CHARLES: Your majesty,—I—)

Char. Pay. Why dost not pay the knave?

Berk. (*Aside to* CHARLES: Has your majesty no money? I have none.)

Char. 'Sdeath, not my own likeness, even in copper. (*Takes bill.*) Four pounds three and two-pence.

Stock. Pullets are dear, and he did command the choicest claret.

Char. (*Aside:* How perplexing!) (*To* STOCKFISH.) You see, my friend—

Stock. I do see, that thy belly hath not taken counsel of thy pocket.

Nell. What is all this? Oh, the bill! Well, pay the good man. (*Taking bill from* CHARLES.) Four pounds three and two-pence. Why, 'tisn't a grain from one of the heaps of gold to be poured into my lap.

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Char. You see, both myself and friend have forgotten our purses.

Nell. If you have no money, leave as a surety one of the diamonds with which I am to be studded; a very little one will serve the reckoning.

Char. (*Aside:* I'd almost give one from my crown to be well out of this!)

Nell. I'm sure the charges are most reasonable. (*Reading bill.*) "Three pullets, five and four-pence." You never bought them cheaper at market. "Rein-deer's tongue, two and a penny. A venison pasty, three and two-pence." How deer's flesh can be sold for the money, I know not; unless, indeed, 'tis stolen from one of the royal parks.

Char. (*Aside:* In which case, certainly, the pasty should come to me for nothing.)

Nell. "Sugar-sops and fish, two and sixpence;" which, with claret, sauce, tarts, ale, bread, and wax candles, amount exactly to four pounds three and two-pence of his majesty's current money.

Char. Certainly, of his majesty's money—(*Aside:* If his majesty had it.)

Nell. As they say in the play-book, "pay the Jew his principal and let him go."

Stock. I am no Jew, but a plain-going, simple-spoken, guileless Christian; nevertheless, I will go, on the receipt of my principal.

Nell. (*To* CHARLES.) Now, my good diamond-merchant!—

Char. (*To* STOCKFISH.) The fact is, I must make a friend of you.

Stock. Not on credit. If ye do not pay, ye shall be locked up in the roundhouse forthwith.

Nell. (*To* CHARLES.) Give the man your place of residence, and let him call for the money.

Stock. Have you a reputable place of dwelling?

Char. I—I—(*Aside to* BERKELEY: Answer for me.)

[*Goes up.*

Berk. My good fellow, never mind the dwelling. Suffer my friend to depart; I will remain in your custody until the money arrives.

Stock. May I be sure?

Char. Religiously sure; besides, I'll reward you with—

Nell. Diamonds—richest damask—and music floating about him?

Stock. If ye open yonder door, a passage will lead ye to my master's private room: he will doubtless agree.

Char. Dull blockhead, why didst not say so before? That door?

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Stock. That door!

[CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *enter the room in scene, when* STOCKFISH *immediately closes, and locks the door upon them.*

Nell. You never mean to make prisoners?—

Char. Why, drawer, that door is locked!—

Stock. Barred and bolted; and so is this. (*Bolting the door.*)

Char. Varlet! what is't ye mean—to cheat us?

Stock. No; I mean that ye should not cheat me. (*Going.*)

Nell. You will never be so barbarous—you cannot?

Stock. I can—I will! [*Exit.*

Nell. (CHARLES *knocks.*) Patience, prisoners; your keeper is gone.

Char. The rascal! I'll tear the house about his ears.

Nell. Don't begin these two minutes—for then I shall be out of it.

Char. Nelly, thou wouldst not leave me?

Nell. Leave you! (CROWSFOOT *heard without.*) The counsellor again! Oh, my fate! (*To* CHARLES.) I have it—remain quiet but for a while, and I'll release you.

Enter CROWSFOOT.

Crows. She's there! she's safe!—she's—(*Seeing her.*) Nelly!

Nell. Sir!

Crows. (*Aside:* She doesn't look angry—she doesn't storm at being carried off!) I own I have been violent.

Nell. Have you, sir?

Crows. I was afraid I might have a little agitated you.

Nell. Oh dear, no, sir. You judge yourself too rashly. (*Aside:* What can he mean?)

Crows. But now, now, we're alone, with not a soul to—

Char. (*Knocking at door.*) Nelly, Nelly!

Crows. Your name—who's that?

Berk. (*Knocking within.*) Nelly!

Crows. Another! why, they know you! Who are they! How came they here? Speak!

Nell. They—they came with me.

Crows. With you?

Nell. That is, they brought me here; certainly, against my will.

Crows. (*Aside:* Oh, I see; they're Joe Haynes's journeymen.) No more of that, sweet Nelly; no reproaches.

Berk. (*Knocking.*) Nelly, have you got the money?

Crows. Money, what money?

Nell. If you must know, money I was going to borrow to pay the gentlemen's score; for which they are now locked up.

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Crows. Score! What's the amount?

Nell. Four pounds, three shillings, and two-pence. Here's the bill.

Crows. (*Reading it.*) "Pullets, tongue, claret!" (*Aside:* Well, for ruffians who live by their cudgels, they've palates for lords!) And you'd pay for the feast?

Nell. I would.

Crows. What, then, you bear no malice towards the rogues?

Nell. They deceived me, certainly; but what's the use of malice?

Crows. That's well: go to your room;—and, for fear you should be seen, don't budge without your mask. You shall pay the bill—here, here's my purse. (*She refuses.*) What! wilt not borrow of me? Why wilt not take my purse, and with it my hand and heart?

Nell. Because the money I might repay, but for the hand and heart, they must fain die creditors.

Crows. Not so—not so! Take the purse.

Berk. (*Within.*) Nelly!

Nell. (*Aside:* Yet there is no other way.)

Crows. Take it.

Berk. (*Within.*) Hast got the money?

Nell. (*Taking the purse.*) Yes.

Crows. And now to seal the loan—one kiss—one.

[*Approaches* NELLY, *who runs under his arms, and meets* STOCKFISH.

Stock. Did ye call?

Nell. The gentleman's bill is—

Stock. Four pounds three shillings and two-pence.

Nell. (*Imitating* STOCKFISH.) Have you written in a fair, round, publican hand the receipt thereto?

Stock. Aye!

Nell. (*Counting money into his hand.*) One—two—three—four. There, then, is your money. There, counsellor, is your purse,—what I have taken I will return.

Stock. And here is the receipt—here the key.

Crows. Which I will hold. Come hither.

[*Takes* STOCKFISH *aside.*

Nell. (*Going to door in scene.*) The bill is paid! (*Going to room at side.*) Now, will I turn the key upon myself, watch my opportunity, and then, good bye, counsellor.

[*Exit into room on left hand.*

Crows. (*To* STOCKFISH.) Fail not, but hasten the coach. (*Exit* STOCKFISH.) Well, the feast's paid for; the gluttonous varlets! and here's the key to let the gaol-birds fly. Nelly! (*Looking about.*) Oh, gone to her room! All the better, I'll—

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Enter JOE HAYNES.

Haynes. So, counsellor, I've found you! I've been running all over the town after you: here is the wench!—Where's the twenty pounds? Not a word,—come!

Crows. There (*Giving it.*) you have the money.

Haynes. And in that room—(*Pointing to door on right hand.*) you have the stolen goods. (*Listening at door.*) Why, bless me, she's surely asleep. Hark! you may hear her snore!

Crows. Snore! you profane villain! Begone! stop! The money has been easily earned? You hav'n't had much trouble?

Haynes. No. The business was managed very quietly and soberly.

Crows. Quietly and soberly? What, after so much tongue and claret?

Haynes. Claret?

Crows. Such things your assistants have consumed; such things I have paid for! Here's the bill; here's the receipt; (*Giving them.* CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *knock violently at door.*) and there's your companions, knocking, to get out of limbo.

Haynes. I forswear all companions—"I am myself alone!"

Crows. If there be a blush in you, I'll bring it to your face. (CHARLES *knocks.*) Coming, gentlemen, coming! Now, knave, own thyself exposed, for I will confront you with—(*Opens door*—CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *run out.*)—the devils that haunt me!

Char. (*Aside to* HAYNES: Hush!) What, counsellor,—become gaoler at the Mitre?

Crows. Mercers, forsooth! I thought they were fellows who lived by cudgels and cold steel. (*To* HAYNES.) Above all else, what fiend made you employ these?

Haynes. Employ! Let the gentlemen speak for themselves;—did I?—

Char. Of course, you employed us.

Crows. (*To* HAYNES.) Can you deny it now?

Haynes. (*Bowing to* CHARLES.) Now, certainly not.

Crows. A supper for *these!* But I won't pay!

Haynes. You have paid. Gentlemen, acknowledge the counsellor's liberality. Here (*Giving them to* CHARLES) is the bill—and here the receipt.

Char. Many thanks, most liberal sir!

[CHARLES *and* BERKELEY *bow ceremoniously.*

Crows. Begone, fellows, begone; you have your hire! Share the twenty pounds and vanish! (*Aside:* If they stop I shall go mad. She sha'n't stir while they are here.)

[*Watches room door on right hand.*

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Char. (*To* HAYNES.) Hire! Twenty pounds! What does old frailty mean?

Haynes. Your majesty, a simple love bargain, for carrying off a damsel—one Mistress Ellen Gwynne. I brought her from the theatre, and placed her in that room.

Char. Tut, man! you dream. I myself escorted pretty Ellen to this house.

Haynes. Then, your majesty, I have blundered rarely; for, I vow, I brought somebody.

Char. Ha, ha, ha! No matter;—'twill be all the same to the counsellor. But stay; the real Nelly is somewhere here—he may trick us after all.

Haynes. Never fear, your majesty; you shall yet see some sport—a scene from a Shropshire comedy.

Char. A Shropshire comedy!

Haynes. A brief time will prepare the actors, and then—

Crows. (*Comes down.*) Will you never go?

Char. We are gone, most liberal sir!—If, at a future time, there should be another lady to carry off—

Haynes. (*Shaking the bag of money.*) Our terms are very moderate—

Berk. And secrecy inviolable.

Haynes. Cudgelling performed in every variety, and ears cropped—

Char. With perfect satisfaction to the employer, and according to the last new fashion. [*Exeunt all but* CROWSFOOT.

Crows. They're gone—yes—there's their last step upon the staircase—I'll make sure of the door. (*Bolts it.*) Now for my little prisoner. (*Goes to door at right hand.*) Od's she has locked herself in;—the dear flutterer! Frightened, I dare say. My dear—my dear—you may come out now. (*Listening.*) Why, as that rascal said, there is a sound like snoring, to be sure;—but, no,—it can't be. Nelly—Nelly—(NELLY *opens left hand door and is coming out, but retreats on seeing* CROWSFOOT—*she watches him from door.*) She comes! I hear her timid partridge foot running along the boards.

Enter ORANGE MOLL, *masked, from right hand room.*

Come along, my love! Sit down,—sit down.

Moll. (*Aside:* The old villain! And is this the lord?)

Crows. Masked! Never mind before me—put it away—let me look on the light. (MOLL *refuses.*) Well, if you won't. Why don't you speak to me? Come, sit—sit. (*Places two old-fashioned high-backed arm-chairs: they sit.*) Speak, love! (MOLL *coughs violently.*) Dear heart! What a cold. Ha! those nasty thin shoes

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But I have such presents for you, Nelly. (MOLL *coughs.*) A glass of wine, Nelly: here is a glass of claret—and it *is* paid for.

[*Gives* MOLL *wine. She drinks.* NELL *creeps round to* MOLL'S *chair, whilst* CROWSFOOT *is engaged at table.* MOLL *seeing her, is about to exclaim—*

Nell. (*Aside to* MOLL: Hush! you shall have all the presents.)

[*Stands behind* MOLL'S *chair, unseen by* CROWSFOOT.

Crows. (*Taking glass from* MOLL.) How do you feel, now?

Nell. (*From behind chair.*) Another glass!

Crows. To be sure. (*Fills, and gives to* MOLL—*she drinks.*) There—it revives you?

Nell. I think it does. I'll take another.

[MOLL *affects repugnance to* NELL.

Crows. Well said; I like this; it shows no silly squeamishness. You won't take another glass?

Nell. Yes, I will; nay, you may bring the bottle.

Crows. No, Nelly; I can only spare another half glass. There—(*Sits*) and now, Nelly, (*Draws his chair closer to* MOLL'S) what would you ask of me, what can I do for you? Ask and have! I'm so delighted! Is there anything in the world you want? Speak! speak! speak! (*Taking out watch.*) 'Tis growing late!

Nell. That's a very pretty watch of yours, counsellor; a lady's watch, is it not?

Crows. My dear first wife's—rest her soul! But 'tis yours, Nelly. [*Gives watch to* MOLL.

Nell. What a beautiful ring on your finger!

Crows. A mere nothing—a mere nothing. Now, Nelly—

Nell. I never did see so pretty a ring.

Crows. Hang it! Say no more about it! (*Gives* MOLL *the ring.*) Now, Nelly, now dove, let us talk about—

Nell. The presents—the presents you spoke of.

Crows. Trifles: a gown—and let us talk.

Nell. The gown now, and then the talk.

Crows. I obey. I'll fetch them myself. (*Rises, and as* CROWSFOOT *gets up, and is crossing towards door,* MOLL *moves the chair round so as to keep her face to him and the better to hide* NELL *behind.* (*Aside:* At the same time I can hurry the coach and bear her like a conqueror off.) I'll fetch them—I'll fetch them! I shan't be long, my soul! [*Exit.*

Moll. (*Embracing* NELL.) Kiss me, child! Pretty darling! what wit it has! Oh, Nelly, how may one woman be deceived in another! Now, the stars pardon me my bad words to you!

Nell. I forgive them;—only tell me how you came here?

Moll. I suffered myself to be led away in your name.—Oh, my

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dear baby! you don't know the wickedness of this town. I do. I was shown into that room, where I must have fallen asleep. But how, my innocent, did you come here?

Nell. I thought I was going home, when I was cheated to this place.

Moll. Cheated! Well, let's be friends; though you take half my orange custom at the theatre.

Nell. Never fear; I am no longer your rival. I have obtained all I ventured for;—for to-day I speak a prologue at the theatre!

Moll. A prologue!—why,—hush!

Nell. The counsellor! Hide, and this time leave him to me.

Moll. But, my dear angel, the gown—

Nell. Gown and all shall be yours. Quick!

[MOLL *retires into room at right hand.*

Enter CROWSFOOT *with a box—fastens door.*

Crows. Here it is,—Nelly! What, taken off thy mask? That's well!

Nell. What gown can it be?

Crows. What gown? The gown you admired at Madame Charrett's!

Nell. Why, you have never bought it?

Crows. Bought it to surprise you; and head-gear to suit. Thou shalt dress like an empress, Nelly. See (*Taking gown from box*), here's the gown!

[MOLL *comes down between* NELL *and* CROWSFOOT.

Crows. Here it is, be happy and take it!

Moll. (*Twitching it away.*) I will!

Crows. In the devil's name, what witch is this?

Moll. (*Taking off her mask.*) Witch! No more a witch than thou'rt conjuror.

Crows. That hag of the pit, Orange Moll!

Moll. Hag! Why, thou supernatural pounce-box! Thou piece of faded red tape! Thou nothing made something by a wig! Hag! pah!

Crows. I shall go off in a spasm! How got she here?

Moll. How? And don't the blushes burn your wrinkles to ask? Wasn't I carried off?

Crows. I—I—Come, Nelly, 'tis near the time that—the time—what's o'clock? (*Looking doubtfully at* NELL *and* MOLL.)

Moll. (*Taking out watch.*) Seven minutes to two, by the watch of your dear first wife.

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Crows. Watch! ring! Robbery!—Jade, I'll hang you! I'll—

[*Violent knocking at the door.*

Stock. (*Without.*) Counsellor—counsellor! There'll be murder!

Crows. Is Beelzebub making holiday? What next?

[NELL *opens door.*

Enter STOCKFISH.

Stock. Flee!—flee, or ye are a dead man! The Shropshire waggon is come in.

Crows. Damn the Shropshire waggon! What of that?

Stock. And in it seven stout young men, who clamour and cry for you.

Nell. For the counsellor—for what?

Stock. For their sister; whom, as they complain, he hath conveyed away.

Crows. (*Aside:* Shropshire! Can I by accident have stumbled on the truth?) Why, Nelly, where are you from?

Nell. Shropshire, sir.

Moll. I'm Shropshire, too!

Crows. (*To* NELL.) And have you any brothers?

Nell. Seven.

Moll. Just my number.

Stock. Savage and cruel they do look;—and they vow wrathfully against thy bones.

Nell. Just like 'em; my brothers are dragons.

Moll. So are mine! Brother Tom once killed a butcher!

Stock. Some of them do carry knotted cudgels as thick as my arm, and some—

Crows. Well?

Stock. A little thicker! If they do find ye with their sister, they will slaughter ye.

Nell. But I'll never leave you.

Moll. No—nor I—never!

Crows. You shall leave me! I don't want you! I don't know you! [*Knocking without.*

Haynes. (*Without.*) We will go up—we'll ha' his life!

Stock. What a shocking thing 'twill be—

Crows. What?

Stock. To have a crowner's inquest in the Mitre!—

[*Knocking continued—voices without.*

Voices. We won't be stopped—we'll ha' his life!

Crows. Put me anywhere! Do anything with me! My character! My bones!

Nell. The only chance, counsellor—get into the gown!

[*Taking gown from box.*

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Crows. What! turn woman?

Nell. Or be cudgelled for a man!

Crows. Give it to me. Oh, that I were in the Temple!—

[*Knocking continued—whilst* NELL *and* MOLL *hastily dress* CROWSFOOT *in gown and head-dress.*

Nell. There—pull this well over your head.

Moll. And be sure to walk pretty and tripping like one of us.

Nell. Here they come! (STOCKFISH *whispers* NELL.) A trick, indeed!

Enter JOE HAYNES, *and two others disguised as peasants, at door.*

Haynes. Giles, Dick, and John—stay there and watch below!

All. Where be he?—where be he?

Haynes. We'll beat 'un like a sheaf o' corn.

Stock. As I'm a man of truth, he whom ye seek is not here.

All. Where be sister?—where be sister, then?

Haynes. (*To* NELL *and* MOLL.) You ben't she—nor—Why, no (*Seizing* CROWSFOOT), yes, spite o' all her Lunnun rags,—I do know her!—Here she be!—here, brothers, be poor lost Susan!

Crows. (*Aside:* Susan!)

Haynes, &c. (*Shaking cudgels at* CROWSFOOT.) Oh, Susey—Susey!

Nell. My good people, this lady is a friend of mine;—she's not your sister.

Moll. My own cousin!

Haynes. (*To* CROWSFOOT.) Deny thine own flesh and blood.

[*They all seize* CROWSFOOT.

Crows. Murder!

Nell. Mercy—you'll kill the young woman!

Enter CHARLES *and* BERKELEY.

Char. Shame, friends! What, cudgel a woman?—

[HAYNES *takes off* CROWSFOOT'S *head-dress.*

Char. The counsellor!—let me congratulate you, learned sir.

Crows. Congratulate!

Char. On your new silk gown. Never did promotion sit so gracefully.

Crows. (*Tearing off gown.*) To be gulled—robbed—to pay for suppers?

Char. Four pounds and odd—Gregory, return the amount.

[BERKELEY *puts purse in* CROWSFOOT'S *hand.*

Crows. If I could persuade her to—Nelly—Nelly (NELL *turns away*). Tricked—exposed—(*All laugh*)—I'll wage war with all

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womankind! I'll confine my practice to suits against 'em, and spend the rest of my days in persecuting the frailties of the whole sex! Oh, woman! woman!

[*Runs off—the party retire up.* MOLL *sits at table drinking.*

Nell. Ha! ha! poor counsellor. Now, to make my escape—

Char. What, Nelly, art running after the lawyer?

Nell. Indeed, you must not detain me.

Char. Why, then, I see it; thou'rt an antiquarian in love, and art fairly taken with the last century. In truth, now, where wouldst go?

Nell. In truth, to the theatre. You'll never guess for what? I am to speak the prologue. Let me go, I pray!

Char. You shall go, and I will be at the theatre too.

Nell. Yet, I'm so frightened!

Char. Never fear; you may see a friend there: be certain you may; and, with such assurance, kind-hearted, good-natured, sprightly Nelly, fare ye well.—Fortune plays a blind game, or she had taken better care of you. But, courage! I tell you, I and some friends will be at the house.

Nell. What, is't a holiday with the Mercers' Company?

Char. Nelly, if thou shouldst see me, yet, seeing, miss the mercer, then—

Nell. Must I die for the loss?—What then?

Char. Then own, with mighty John, that—

> "Princes may retire whene'er they please,
> And breathe free air from out their palaces;
> They go sometimes unknown to shun their state,
> And then 'tis manners not to know or wait."

Nell. What is all this?

Char. Four lines from the new play to-night: mark them, and learn the wisdom they advise. And so, again, courage, Nelly, courage and success! [*Exeunt* CHARLES *and* BERKELEY.

Haynes. And now to return our dresses here to the wardrobe, for again I am one of the theatre.

Nell. What! you?

Haynes. By royal mandate from the king. Let's haste; for to-day their majesties in full state do honour to Mr. Dryden's new play.

Nell. Lud a mercy! "The Conquest of Grenada?"

Haynes. The same.

Moll. (*Staggering forward.*) Why, bless me, child! Thou'rt white as chalk!

Nell. Well I may be. I have to speak the prologue; and, before the king and queen!—My gracious!

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Haynes. What! are you the new comer the managers are mad about? You the heroine of the great hat?

Nell. I! Manager Hart would make me promise. But I have been so teased! I have hardly looked at the words. What shall I do?

Haynes. Hope, and all will be well. It would be uncharitable too severely to condemn for faults, without taking some thought of the sterling goodness which mingles in and lessens them.

Nell. Say you so? Why then, good friends, come to the theatre and hear me, if there yet be time, rehearse the prologue. [*Exit.*

Moll. Joseph—Mr. Haynes—you brought me here—pray take me back again. [HAYNES *leads* MOLL *off.* *Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Passage or Lobby of the King's Theatre.*
Enter HART, *in full dress.*

Hart. (*Looking at watch.*) If the girl, this Nell Gwynne, should disappoint us after all!

Enter MAJOR MOHUN.

Moh. My dear Hart—the girl is come! Though, indeed, half dead with fear for the event.

Hart. We'll have her run through the verse at once. Where's Dryden?

Moh. He's behind admiring the big hat; and, with the prophetic fury of a poet, vows it will extinguish Nokes for ever. In sober truth, 'tis a beaver for Atlas.

Enter JOE HAYNES.

Hart. Mr. Haynes, you are welcome once again; yet, mind, no more bells, Joe. But time hastens, let us go and encourage the new comer. [*Flourish of trumpets without.*

Moh. Their majesties.

Hart. Nay, then, we must even trust to fortune; for there is no time for rehearsal. Away, gentlemen; away, all to your places! Come, Mohun, to light the king to his box.

[*Flourish of trumpets—exeunt* MOHUN *with* HART *and* HAYNES. *Trumpets and music continued, when—*

[*Re-enter* HART *and* MOHUN *lighting Charles and the Queen with* Guards, Lords, *and* Ladies *in waiting.* Attendants, &c. &c.: *they cross the stage.*

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SCENE THE LAST.—*The Interior of the King's Theatre. The Royal Box, in which are their Majesties, &c. Music, "Britons, strike home."*

The bell is rung, the curtain opens in the middle, and enter NELL *"in a broad-brimmed hat and waist-belt."*

NELL. "This jest was first of the other house's making;
And, five times tried, has never failed of taking:
For 'twere a shame a poet should be killed
Under the shelter of so broad a shield.
This is that hat whose very sight did win ye
To laugh and clap as though the devil were in ye;
As then for Nokes, so now I hope you'll be
So dull to laugh once more for love of me.
I'll write—— [*Recognising* CHARLES.
What! he—the King!—the words are flown,
[*Coming forward.*
For Dryden's syllables, pray take my own.
[*Lets hat fall.*
First let me ask that niceness may not halt
With eager eyes to scan out every fault;
And miss, with venal look, those streaks of light,
Which fortune only would not have more bright.
Of good and ill all character is made;
The good accept—the rest cast into shade.
Of some we'd show (if so our hopes might draw,)
The moral amber, with nor grub nor straw;
Would take away th' unseemly gnats and flies,
And keep the prettiness that glads all eyes.
This our design: if granted, may I ask
Your hands and wishes for th' attempted task?

END OF NELL GWYNNE.

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THE HOUSEKEEPER.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

Sidney Maynard	MR. VINING.
Tom Purple	MR. BRINDAL.
Simon Box	MR. BUCKSTONE.
Father Oliver	MR. WEBSTER.
Daguerre	MR. GALLOT.
Benjamin	MR. COVENEY.
Laval	MR. W. JOHNSON.
Christopher Layer	MR. BARTLETT.
Bin	MR. J. COOPER.
Officer	MR. EATON.
Gentleman	MR. NEWCOMBE.

Visitors, Soldiers, &c.

Felicia	MISS TAYLOR.
Sophy Hawes	MRS. HUMBY.
Widow Duckling	MRS. TAYLEURE.

*** *This Comedy was represented for the first time, July* 17, 1833.

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THE HOUSEKEEPER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An old-fashioned Apartment, handsomely furnished.*

Enter FELICIA *and* SOPHY HAWES.

Felicia. I am glad, Sophy, thou hast not forgotten thy old companion.

Sophy. Dear madam, though it's seven long years since you left us for foreign parts, there's hardly been a day that I hav'n't sometimes thought of you.

Fel. I have not deserved your thoughts, Sophy. I fear me, travel, with its new objects, has made me slight old friends in Derbyshire.

Sophy. Just what my poor mother told me, madam. She used to say,—Sophy, child, where is the use in fuming and fidgeting? Thou knowest, the lady Felicia, though she was a pretty babe, and thy foster-sister, now she's a woman grown, mus'n't think of folks like us.—So, put such stuff from thy head, girl. But though I tried, I couldn't quite.

Fel. And thou art come to seek thy fortune in London? I am rejoiced that my return to England,—

Sophy. Oh! we heard about your uncle's death, and that you would soon come back. Your poor uncle!

Fel. My last relative—my last friend, Sophy. I do but visit England to await the settlement of his will, and may after, quit it for ever.

Sophy. Madam!

Fel. But, Sophy, what am I to think of our Derbyshire bachelors?—Was there not one with wit enough to keep you at home?

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Sophy. He didn't stay at home himself, madam.

Fel. Did he win your love, and then desert you?

Sophy. He didn't desert me, madam.

Fel. How then?

Sophy. We were to be married; but folks would meddle. The parson—I dare say he meant well—talked to us of early troubles, and advised us to get money first; and so, poor Simon set off to a place here in London; and—for my part, I don't see what the parson had to do with it, except to marry us, and leave the rest to ourselves.

Enter Servant.

Serv. The young man, below, madam, who came with—

Sophy. That 's Simon, my lady—Simon Box: he would come; he said he shouldn't rest if he didn't speak to you.—[*Exit* Servant.]—He would come.

Enter Simon Box.

Simon. Your servant, my lady: Sophy is come up all the way from Matlock, to a place. Now, though the foolish people in Derbyshire said 'twas a rare chance to be housekeeper in London, yet I—you see, my lady, you and I know what London is.

Fel. I perceive.—You wish to hear something of her mistress.

Simon. No, my lady; I wish to hear something of her master.

Fel. Master! Do I then know the gentleman?

Simon. Saving your presence, he hath played so many tricks in his time, 'tis said few know him long. But, as he has now forsworn the world; shut himself close in an old house in St. James's Park; given himself up to study, some say to magic—but we know, my lady, what folks will sometimes call magic—if you think he 'll keep in this staid mind,—

Fel. He! Of what strange gentleman do you speak?

Simon. Of Mr. Sidney Maynard.

Sophy. Your ladyship's cousin.

Fel. My cousin, Sidney!

Sophy. Dear heart! isn't your ladyship well?

Fel. I understand, now. Go on, friend.

Simon. No, madam; I 've done. Come, Sophy.

Sophy. But won't you hear her ladyship? Isn't Mr. Maynard a true gentleman, madam?

Simon. Yes,—and a young gentleman. No, Sophy, 'twill never do.

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Fel. I will engage for the honour—the integrity of my cousin. Yet, tell me, Sophy; what accident can have selected you for this service?

Sophy. Why, madam, a letter came down to our curate for somebody to keep your cousin's house.—The widow Duckling, was coming; when, somehow, the exciseman made up his mind of a sudden, and was to take her to church the day after I came away. As I knew the secret, I,—that is, Simon being in London —no—that is—I came up instead of the widow.

Simon. And a thoughtless child thou wert. The widow was a discreet, sober, ugly woman of five-and-forty; thou art nineteen and what's worse, not a scarecrow.

Sophy. Well, Simon, every one must have a beginning. And, I'm sure, Mr. Maynard is a gentleman: doesn't madam say as much?

Fel. (*Aside:* Never was wilder, bolder thought, and yet I'll follow it! Love, all but hopeless, will have me venture all!)

Simon. No, Sophy: doubts come thicker on me—thou sha'n't go. If her ladyship, as I am out of service, could have given thee or me, or both of us, a nook in her own family,—but to keep house for a strange young man!

Fel. I pray, for a short time, let the trial be made. You cannot doubt Sophy—should not doubt me. If, after a time—say two or three weeks—she'd quit such service, I will befriend ye both.

Simon. Will a week do? Well, be it as your ladyship likes. I know that her mother nursed you and her; that, for many a day, you were like little sisters together; so, you can't but have a kind of love for the girl, and so—I'll trust you. Come, Sophy, I'll take you to the Park.

Fel. I will see her there. Yet, for further satisfaction, 'twould be well you waited on Mr. Maynard to acquaint him of Sophy's coming.

Simon. To be sure. (*Aside:* I can then scan my gentleman. I'll look him through and through; and if I spy a flaw, she sha'n't go—no, I'll run in debt for marriage fees, and we'll starve together.) [*Exit.*

Sophy. I knew Mr. Maynard must be the same nice young gentleman he was, when, eight years ago, he saved your ladyship from drowning.

Fel. He is, as I hear.

Sophy. What! ar'n't you friends?

Fel. I have seen him—and at long intervals—but twice since he saved my life; and then, as I believe, he neither saw me nor knew of my presence. A family dispute, arising from political

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opinions, has made us strangers. And now, child, attend to me. Sophy, I am sure thou dost love me?

Sophy. As I love breath, madam.

Fel. Wouldst do any honest thing to serve me?

Sophy. I'd almost lay down my life for you.

Fel. And, if I trust thee, thou wilt keep a secret?

Sophy. As I'd keep the half of a love sixpence.

Fel. Then come with me, Sophy. I have a trial for thy love: it may be, as accidents fall out, a hard one. Yet, be faithful, Sophy; and doubt not a full return. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.—*An Apartment in* Maynard's *House.*

Enter Maynard *and* Purple.

Purple. Never think it, Sidney; 'tisn't in mortal flesh of eight-and-twenty. Thou wilt grow tired of this thy hermitage, ere thou canst grace it with as much beard as an oyster.

Maynard. Well, time tells a tale.

Pur. What end dost thou propose to this new whim? What dost thou seek?

May. I have told thee—wisdom.

Pur. Pshaw! true wisdom's a gipsy, and pitches her tent by the highways. Seek her in the court, the camp, the tavern—ay, the gaming-house; but stay not at home,—for, depend on't, wisdom will never knock at thy gate.

May. I shall woo her to me by science,—contemplation.

Pur. Impossible: the ghosts won't let thee. Smile; the ghosts of—thy former days. I'll fancy thee here of winter nights, walled in by books—philosophers and sages in their sickly vellum. Well! thou canst not study: 'tis true, thou hast before thee a treatise writ in deep Chaldee; but, canst thou read? Do not spectres of thy past life come between thee and the book? Are not silks rustling in the air—delicate feet tripping over the boards—do not thy bookshelves change to tapestried walls—nay, doth not the very death-watch in the wainscot quit its dull tick-tick,—and, to thy fancy, strike into a jig?

May. To thine, Tom: for thy fancy would turn a mummy to a Daphne.

Pur. I thank my fancy! Thou'lt be astrologer, too?—Wilt catch cold and chilblains searching the skies? I warrant me, Sid, thou'lt make rare discoveries in the milky-way.—Thou'lt seen a mis-shapen things; but caps, ribands, gowns, and

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petticoats of a distracting cut. Of all men, thou art least fit for this. Why, thou'lt never rightly see the man in the moon.

May. Humph! Why not?

Pur. Because to thee he'll ever seem a woman. 'Tis plain thou'rt not in earnest; else thou'dst gone into some cave or ruin and not have set up hermit within ear-shot of the court.

May. Have I not said, 'twas father Oliver's covenant with me ere we quitted Paris, that we should dwell in London?

Pur. Ay; he'd fain tell the fortunes of the maids of honour, and cast the nativities of pet spaniels.

May. Wilt never be serious? Father Oliver is a man of profound research, most curious knowledge: are not his looks?—

Pur. Most reverend. His hair is long and sleek; his face, unruffled as a dish of cream; and, for his voice, no flute hath a softer delivery. Oh! doubtless, he is wise!

May. There's not a science hidden from him.

Pur. It may be—(*Aside:* that of picking locks included.)

May. He can read the heavens.

Pur. Certainly—(*Aside:* after his own alphabet.)

May. Hath studied antiquities.

Pur. The most ancient—(*Aside:* for credulity was the first-born of Adam.)

May. In fine, he is learned in all things; from a constellation to a plant.

Pur. The mountebank's true circle of knowledge; for they who huckster with the stars, often end their learning with hempseed.

May. Well, thou wert born for idle talk, and dost but fulfil thy destiny. Talk on—I am fixed in my new purpose. I have thrown away ten good years in twenty foolish courses. I have tried all, save study, and found all vain. And now, I am almost thirty—warning thirty.

Pur. Warning thirty!

May. 'Tis half the journey, Tom. Depend on't, after thirty, 'tis time to count the milestones.

Pur. I never was good at a reckoning—count for us both. Here comes sleek wisdom, father Oliver. Farewell; for here I am as one of the profane.

Enter FATHER OLIVER.

Oli. I crave your pardon, sir—I did conceive you were alone.

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Pur. Nay, let me spoil no conjuration—I am gone. (*Returning:* Oh, Maynard! is the woman yet arrived?)

Oli. A woman!—here?

Pur. A woman—and here;—and why not?

May. An old dame from the country.—Without a housekeeper the place seems dull and starved.

Oli. Certainly; and yet Benjamin is apt, vigilant, and faithful. Have we need of other help?

Pur. Need! Live in a palace, yet without a petticoat, 'tis but a place to shiver in. Whereas, take off the house-top—break every window—make the doors creak—the chimneys smoke—give free entry to sun, wind, and rain,—still will a petticoat make the hovel habitable; nay, bring the little household gods crowding about the fire-place.

Oli. (*To* MAYNARD.) Yet here, sir, there is nothing to be done which Benjamin—

Pur. Benjamin! Tut, a sage is a fool to an old woman. Can Benjamin cure coughs, darn hose, make possets? Is he learned in flannel—doth he know what water-gruel is? What! dwell in this huge carcase of a house, without some comfortable woman to give it warmth and life? No—I have followed my own counsel; written to my old college friend, in Derbyshire, for a staid, plain, elderly widow; a simple-minded soul, innocent of London craft. Doubtless, she'll soon arrive.—and then—then, father wisdom!—

Oli. What then, sir?

Pur. Then we'll have a house-warming shall make the roof quake. But, Sid, to return to the matter that brought me here. Why wilt not make one of us to-night? Nay, for one night leave this den of melancholy and come among us. We shall have rich sport.

May. I have said, it is impossible. I am making certain calculations, and to-night Venus will appear—

Pur. I know she will;—then why not come and meet her? Not your Venus, twinkling coldly thousands of miles away; but a Venus, eye to eye—hand to hand; young, blooming—well, I see 'tis vain. Thou'rt for celestial graces; I'm for solid love on *terra firma:* I'd ogle for myself, thou'dst woo through a telescope; and so I leave thee for my Venus with kindling looks, to thy Venus and the rheumatism. [*Exit.*

Oli. Will the gentleman be frequent in his visits?

May. No; finding me fixed in my design, he'll leave me to my humour. And I am fixed:—I give up all the vain purposes of life, all its follies and its feuds, for hard, unremitting study.

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Oli. At any time a wise determination.—And to a man of birth and fortune—(*Aside:* I'll try him now)—who has so many roads to honour,—

May. To what simpletons agree to call honour.

Oli. At a time like the present, in the contest about to commence—

May. Contest!—

Oli. It may be but a rumour—yet it was whispered in Paris—

May. What was whispered?

Oli. That king James—I mean the chevalier,—

May. The Pretender as he is called?

Oli. As he is called,—would make another venture for the English crown. This was said.

May. But what says his majesty, king George the first? Another venture?

Enter BENJAMIN.

Well, sir?

Ben. A woman is below—a woman from Derbyshire: she says to keep the house.

May. Let her come up.

Oli. I will send her to you. (*Aside:* No, we cannot count on him. Well, as he will not work with us, he shall, spite of himself, work for us.) [*Exit.*

Ben. I kept father Oliver's house in Paris—he said I was to keep your house here. I don't understand—

May. If you'd quit your place, the doors are open. If you'd still keep it, learn better manners. Send the woman to me.

Ben. (*Aside:* She'll spoil all, now: and yet, if she's curious, she'd better staid in Derbyshire than come near Benjamin.) [*Exit.*

May. (*Sits.*) Yes, I am sure I have done wisely. In good time have I turned from the dissipation and frivolity of life, to seek in true wisdom—

Re-enter BENJAMIN.

Ben. Here's the woman.

May. Very well.—(BENJAMIN *shows on* FELICIA, *dressed as a country-girl.* BENJAMIN *goes off.*)—In true wisdom, the only lasting good. All else is hollow. Glory! 'tis but a bubble blown from blood. Law! a spider's wisdom: and politics! the statesman ponders and plans, winning nothing certain but ingratitude and the indigestion. Whilst for woman! we hunt

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a wild-fire and vow it is a star. I have done with these vanities. Woman!—I'faith I had forgotten my housekeeper.—Now, for a face with a decent sprinkling of wrinkles—a skin of parchment, wherein time hath left a memorandum of comeliness—a few silver hairs—a quiet, grandmotherly eye—four teeth at the most, and a back like a bow. Such should be the handmaid of a philosopher, and such—(*Rising and seeing* FELICIA.) —My dear,—my—why, young, pretty, and—are you from the skies?

Fel. No, sir; Derbyshire.

May. This is some mistake. Are you sure I am the person. To whom were you sent?

Fel. To a steady, respectable, studious gentleman. Perhaps, I've been misdirected?

May. Oh! you must have come to the wrong house.

Fel. Do you think so, sir?

May. That is, possibly there may be another steady gentleman in the neighbourhood; but I doubt whether he is—

Fel. (*Showing card.*) "Mr. Sidney Maynard, Birdcage Walk, St. James's Park?"

May. My name and address, certainly, but—(*Aside:* She's very pretty!)

Fel. I thought I was right, sir.

May. Yes, child, but—(*Aside:* pretty!—she's beautiful.) But tell me, if—if—(*Aside:* I feel I'm becoming a philosopher, for a blooming wench makes a fool of me.) Tell me; how long have you lost your husband?

Fel. Lost! I've not begun to lose, yet.

May. Not begun to lose?

Fel. I never had the care of one.

May. The person named to me was in her widowhood.

Fel. Yes, sir; but she has since grown out of it.

May. Why, child, do you talk riddles? What has happened to the woman?

Fel. A second husband, sir.

May. If so, I must make the best of my disappointment.

Fel. I'm sure, sir, it sha'n't be my fault if anything's amiss.

May. Your fault? You say the widow is married; well, what do you wish?

Fel. To take her place, sir.

May. What! be my housekeeper? Live in this place—in such a house?

Fel. It's a very nice house, sir; and when put a bit to rights—

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May. But, my dear girl, your reputation—you don't know the dangers, the deceits of London?

Fel. Oh, don't I?—I've had a lesson I shall never forget.

May. Already?

Fel. See here, sir—(*Showing a ring on her finger.*)

May. Well, I see—a ring.

Fel. 'Twas picked up in the street only an hour ago by, as I thought, a good old soul, who offered me her share in it—for she said it was part mine—for half the money in my pocket.

May. A good beginning. Thou hast spent half thy fortune on pieces of red and white glass.

Fel. But then I have bought wisdom will serve me in all hazards.

May. What! in the ring?

Fel. Yes! for when gentlemen say fine things to me—call my lips rubies, and my eyes diamonds, I shall turn from them and look here at my bits of glass.

May. Very well. But some may talk of marriage?

Fel. Still I shall think of the cheat to-day, and consider if old women are the only ring-droppers.

May. Thou hast a pretty way of turning loss to profit. What's thy name, child?

Fel. Sophia Hawes.

May. Sophia?

Fel. Friends and acquaintance call me Sophy.

May. Sophy? (*Aside:* This is the oddest adventure?—out, no, 'twill never do. A student, with a Hebe for a housekeeper!—and why not? 'Tis rashness to seek temptation—but cowardice to fly from it. Besides, there is so much singularity in the affair, and the girl is so innocent, and so—so pretty—that, until she is settled, I ought, I must, give her house-room. Sophia—no, that will never do,—thou must let me call thee Sophy, too?

Fel. And welcome, sir.

May. Tell me Sophy; do they know in Derbyshire to what place thou art come?

Fel. Nobody, but the widow; and she promised to keep the secret till she was fairly married. I stole away directly, for I did so want to see London.

May. Well, Sophy, for a season at least thou mayst remain. And now, child, (*taking her hand,*) attend to me. You must be very diligent.

Fel. I'll never be quiet, sir.

May. Yet, go about without any stir or noise.

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Fel. If ever you chance to hear me, you won't know me from a mouse.

May. Never show any ill temper.

Fel. La, sir! what *is* ill temper?

May. Never come near me in my studies.

Fel. For the live-long day I won't even think of you.

May. Never talk.

Fel. I hate talking.

May. Never—no, I think that winds up the list. These preliminaries settled (*still holds her hand*), give me your hand on—

Fel. *Which* hand, sir?

May. Which? why, both hands. And now, Sophy—

Enter BENJAMIN.

What do you want?

Ben. There's a man below, come about the bricks from Babylon.

May. I'll come; I'll—Benjamin; henceforth, attend to this person in all things. (*Aside:* Bricks from Babylon! Faith, just now I am more puzzled by hierographs from Derbyshire.) [*Exit.*

Fel. Benjamin.

Ben. Well?

Fel. Your keys, Benjamin.

Ben. Humph? You are to be my mistress, I suppose?

Fel. Yes, Benjamin; and seeing, Benjamin, that I am entrusted with so rare a jewel, Benjamin, I would fain keep it under lock and key, Benjamin.

Ben. There they are—(*giving them*)—(*Aside:* at least, a few of them. Be sure and don't lose any of us.) [*Exit.*

Fel. To what has my fortune—an impulse which I have felt in vain to combat—reduced me? He is generous, kind, good; every look, every word, declares it. And yet I wish I had not come—wish—alas! I dare not speak my wish, no, not to my own heart, though 'tis well nigh breaking with it. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*St. James's Park. View of* MAYNARD'S *House, Bird-cage Walk.*

Enter SIMON BOX.

Simon. (*Looking at the house.*) No; I'll not take the trouble to knock—I am satisfied; it's not an honest, straight-forward-looking house. There's a grimness about the walls, and the

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windows don't stare fairly out, but have a leering, squinting look. The very chimneys only seem to stand there for a trick. Sophy shan't live there: and I'll back and say so. Stay now; if, to be sure, I could see any of Mr. Maynard's tradesmen; if I could get his character from the butcher or the baker; a good word from his tailor would be better than all.

[OLIVER *is seen to come from* MAYNARD'S *house.*

Oli. It is full time. Layer promised to come or send.

Simon. Pray, sir, without offence, what do you think of that house?

Oli. That house! (*Aside:* Is this a messenger?) Why, friend?

Sim. Nay, sir, I wait for you. A little curious business that —what *do* you think of that house?

Oli. (*Aside:* He seems a simple fool; I may, with little risk, venture the pass-words.) I think—(*Approaching* SIMON; *with significance.*)—"The white rose is a pretty flower."

Simon. No question; though some folks have a better liking for the red.

Oli. Just so.

Sim. But, sir, don't let us part on colours. (*Exit* OLIVER.) Now, is that a mad gardener or is it—Eh? another.

Enter DAGUERRE.

Pray, sir, what do you think of that house?

Dag. That house? (*Aside:* A new recruit, perhaps.)—What, that house with the white roses in the window?

Simon. White roses? There's nothing but the curtains, and they seem—

Dag. Very true. [*Exit.*

Simon. Surely they are curtains.

Enter LAVAL.

Kind sir, may a poor man ask your opinion? What do you think of that house?

Lav. That with the weathercock?

Simon. With the weathercock.

Lav. Of the shape and colour of a—a white rose?

Simon. No: of the shape and colour of a red fox.

Lav. Very right—a red fox. [*Exit.*

Simon. I see; there's some wager a-foot about white roses. To the next I'll speak roses too. (*Looking off.*) Why, there they are, talking to that silky-looking old gentleman. And

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there, another joins them. Now, the two leave, and the old man and the stranger—their heads close together—come this way. I'll hang back a little. (*Retires.*)

Enter OLIVER *and* CHRISTOPHER LAYER.

Lay. This is the golden time. To-night we must decide.

Oli. Art sure we are yet strong enough?

Lay. We shall gain no strength by longer delay. All is ripe in Scotland,—my lads on the Essex coast wait but the word to rise, and now or never is the time. At what hour shall we come?

Oli. Ten.

Lay. The signal?

Oli. After I have lighted the lamp in the second window; I will be at the door and admit all friends.

Lay. The old pass word, "The white rose is a pretty flower!" Is not your student to be won to us?

Oli. Let him alone. We must be content with cheating him.

Lay. A cheat indeed! If he knew the scholar Oliver were the agent of King James—if he knew that you had made his house the rendezvous of rebels!

Oli. The jest lies only in success. Go, and see our friends are punctual.

Lay. Never doubt them. The lamp at the second window—the hour ten—and the pass words—

Oli. (*Seeing* SIMON *come down.*) Hush! [*Exit* LAYER.

Simon. Kind sir, the house you were pointing at—the house that like a white rose on its slender stalk—

Oli. What of the house?

Simon. I would fain know its reputation, for I suspect—

Oli. You do?

Simon. In fact, I am certain that in that house—

Oli. Well?

Simon. A conspiracy is hatching against—

Oli. Silence.

Simon. I won't!—A conspiracy against—

Oliv. (*Alarmed.*) Speak not so loud. Against whom?

Simon. Against Sophy Hawes!—I know it. A pretty place for a young housekeeper!

Oli. Oh!—the housekeeper? You know the young woman? Her friend, perhaps?

Simon. I've got beyond friendship a long time!

Oli. (*Aside:* So!—He may rid us of her.) To be plain with

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you, I have heard stories of that house that—but few words will suffice: take the victim away.

Simon. I thought so.

Oli. You cannot conceive the riots—the iniquities acted in that house.

Simon. The villainy shows through the walls. There's a conscience in brick and mortar.

Oli. Defer not a moment—take the hapless creature away! [*Exit.*

Simon. If wisdom hadn't kept the hapless creature away! I wonder what he and his friend were talking of. For once, I wished for long ears—for not a word came to me. As for Sophy, let me see—

Enter SOPHY.

Sophy. This is so whimsical, I can't help creeping about, looking at the house. How my lady will manage when—(*Seeing* SIMON.)—Simon?

Simon. Sophy! why, what dost here alone?

Sophy. Alone? I—(*Aside:* La! I wish I might tell him.) Why, I've just stepped out for—for an errand for my master.

Simon. Master!

Sophy. Yes; we did'nt wait for your coming back; it's all over—I'm settled.

Simon. You are?

Sophy. What does the man gape and stare at? I'm settled, I tell you; and there's our house.

Simon. You don't call that a house?

Sophy. What does it look like?

Simon. As I stand here, it looks a great monster; all the windows seem large goggling eyes; the door yawns into a dark, deep mouth, and shows a long throat with, all the way down, fifteen ridges of double teeth!

Sophy. Simon, you've taken to drinking! I never saw a prettier house; I don't see—

Simon. I know it—poor soul! Do you see (*pointing off*) that swan in the water? It doesn't seem to move a joint,—but, white and without a spot, floats at its own accord?

Sophy. Pretty creature! and so it does.

Simon. I doubt not that house, like many more in this town, is a swan house.

Sophy. A swan house?

Simon. All white and fair outside, as far as you can see; but then, only think of the black legs that's working out of sight! I have heard such tales of that den!

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Sophy. Tales, Simon!

Simon. Sixteen young housekeepers since Christmas are a few.

Sophy. Sixteen! And all had warning?

Simon. Warning! Five were driven to poison: three are in a madhouse; two made a rash use of their garters; and that piece of water has been dragged for the bodies of the other six, but—

Sophy. But what, Simon?

Simon. Not one has ever come to hand.

Sophy. (*Aside:* My dear young lady!) But is it all true, Simon?

Simon. I heard the whole story just now from a weeping gentleman in black—in black; one of the relations, no doubt.

Sophy. What! here?

Simon. Here. You may tell by the tears where he stood.

Sophy. What shall I do, Simon?

Simon. Drop down upon your two knees, clasp both your hands, and pray that all delights and blessings may fall, thick as hailstones, on my head.

Sophy. On your head?

Simon. Your preserver's head! But come with me to the lady Felicia's.

Sophy. I—I—(*Aside:* Oh, that I might tell him! Yet I mus'n't seem afraid, else he'll never leave me.) Don't I tell you that I'm come out on an errand for my master?

Simon. An errand, for what?—speak—for what?

Sophy. For—for—(*Aside:* what shall I say?)—for worsted.

Simon. Worsted?

Sophy. Yes; red worsted.

Simon. Red worsted! Perhaps, blood-red! There's a hint of murder in the colour.

Sophy. Simon, I don't believe any of these tales; I—there's nothing in the house that—

Simon. If ghosts are nothing: four female ghosts—two of them with brown hair, sisters—in hoops, and playing on the harpsichord, go through every room at midnight.

Sophy. Where do they come from?

Simon. From the wine-cellar: for, on digging there eight months ago, last Tuesday, there were found four skeletons, drest in white satin, to match.

Sophy. (*Aside:* My poor lady!) I—I don't believe a word of it.—(They'll kill her!)—I tell you, Simon, hold your tongue! You only talk to frighten me—(My sweet lady!)—Don't speak; don't come near me!—(I'll die for her!)—Let me go about my business.

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Simon. Not a foot, Sophy—not a foot without me.

Enter PURPLE.

Pur. How now, sirrah? Let the girl pass. Do you know this person, my pretty maid?

Sophy. Never saw his face before, sir!

Simon. What?

Sophy. And he will plague me so; pray sir, keep him from me, sir! Thank ye, sir. (*Aside:* And now, to lose Simon, and then get to my dear lady!) [*Runs off.*

Simon. Sophy! Sophy! Do you know what you've done, sir?

Pur. Tut! let the wench go home.

Simon. (*Aside:* This gay bird may know something of that cave. I'll,swallow my anger, and—) Pray, sir, do you know that house?

Pur. Very well. Why?

Simon. The new housekeeper, who—

Pur. What! Is the woman come?

Simon. She *is* come. Did you expect her?

Pur. We have looked for her some days.

Simon. (*Aside:* We! I'm right—he's one of the gang!)

Pur. You know the woman, then?

Simon. I think I do.

Pur. And is she a nice, comfortable creature?

Simon. She was this morning.

Pur. Ha! ha! an excellent thought! If the lads warm quickly over the bottle, I'll bring them all away to Maynard's, and, spite of him, make a night of it! The housekeeper is really come, eh? Then we'll give full employment to her, depend upon it! [*Exit.*

Simon. I wonder the sparks don't come out of my mouth; for, from my fingers to my toes, I glow like a blacksmith's forge. What's to be done? I've tried poison, drowning, ghosts—and all with no help. I have it—I'll go back to the lady Felicia; make her send for Sophy, marry her, and there an end. (*Looking at house.*) A pretty dwelling for a housekeeper! I know not rightly who could take the place, unless the devil had a sister out of service. [*Exit.*

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SCENE IV.—MAYNARD'S *Study. The room furnished with book-shelves, globes, maps, antiques, statues, &c. A large telescope, with other astronomical and scientific instruments.*

FELICIA *discovered, arranging books and papers.*

Fel. Here I am, installed in office! Already I have raised my philosopher's curiosity. If I can, by a mixture of simplicity and address, thicken the mystery—if I can but continue to excite his interest, until, quite bewildered, he begs the goddess to walk forth from the cloud, and—and, alas! what then? if I have failed to touch his heart, will he not misconstrue my boldness? I—I almost wish I was safe at home again. Ah me! here he comes!

Enter MAYNARD.

May. Sophy! (*Aside:* What eyes this girl has!) This is very wrong. I told you never to enter my study. No petticoat must violate the sanctity of this retreat.

Fel. I was only putting the things to rights.

May. Sophy, receive this as a solemn charge; never attempt to put anything to rights in this room—I prefer confusion.

Fel. But, sir, only look at the cobwebs and spiders.

May. I'm partial to cobwebs—I encourage spiders.

Fel. But then, the mice—they gallop about like little ponies. Why don't you keep a cat, sir?

May. A cat! No, even in little things I hope I have the spirit of a philanthropist.

Fel. Oh! you prefer a trap? But if learning were wisdom, your mice should be too wise to be caught.

May. Too wise! How?

Fel. Because 'twould seem, by some of your volumes, that the mice devoured as many books as their master.

[*Showing book, with its leaves half-destroyed.*

May. (*Taking book.*) Alack, poor Homer! If Pythagoras' creed were true, and every mouse were an annotator, they couldn't have used the Iliad more unmercifully. Yes, Sophy, we must do for Homer what Homer couldn't afford for himself—keep a cat. Now, go, child; I am very busy.

Fel. I won't say a word, sir.

May. A word? How can I study with you here? I am going to observe a planet that—

Fel. What planet? I do so love the stars!

May. What can you know about the stars?

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Fel. Oh! there were a great many gypsies in our parts. What planet, sir?

May. Why—why Venus, so you must leave me.

Fel. La! sir, why can't you observe Venus with me in the room?

May. (*Aside:* What a whimsical creature it is!) Sophy,—I —I wish thou wert old and ugly.

Fel. That's what our girls in Derbyshire used to wish;—but, bless you, it did no good. Why can't you study whilst I —(*Taking hold of one of* MAYNARD'S *ruffles.*) Look at this beautiful lace, all in holes! I tell you what—(*Taking off his ruffle.*) whilst you look at the stars, I'll sit here and darn this ruffle. [*Takes housewife from pocket; sits down, and begins to work.*

May. (*Aside:* Now, spite of me I can't be angry. What delicate, soft fingers she has!) (*Tearing his other ruffle.*) A few stitches have dropped in this. (*Holding out his wrist,* FELICIA *takes off the ruffle.*) Yes, she may stay—she'll not break on my abstractions. (*Looking among papers.*) Aye, here are my calculations. (*Sits.*) Here is the work of many a severe hour. Copernicus maintained—

Fel. (*At work.*) The most lovely lace, to be sure!

May. Maintained this chimera,—but Tycho Brahe—

Fel. Was never bought for a guinea a-yard.

May. Now, Sophy, if you talk—

Fel. Talk! I was only thinking aloud, sir.

May. Destroyed this hypothesis.

Fel. (*Still working.*) Ha! there goes another thread.

May. Now, Sophy! (*Rising.*) But the night is coming on, I must to my work—(*Going to telescope.*)—I'll just sweep the heavens. Ha! there's Saturn, and to night how sharply the rings are defined.

[MAYNARD *continues to look through the telescope.*

Fel. (*Working, sings in a drawling tone.*)

In one of our Derbyshire springs,
Which petrify bud, fruit, and tree,
An old fairy goldsmith sold rings,
To people who wedded would be.
Alack! well a day, even Cupid's light wing
May flit near the brink, but beware of the spring.

May. Sophy, this is insupportable! I cannot suffer this noise.

Fel. Noise, sir! why, it's called music in Derbyshire.

May. Then, like many travellers, it has changed its name on the road. If you breathe another syllable,—

Fel. I won't think one. I'm sure I thought to amuse you, but if—

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May. Will you close that pretty mouth? Now, not a word—not even a sigh—(*Again looks through telescope.*)—I never before beheld the rings so luminous.

Fel. (*Sings in her natural voice.*)

"We asked," cry the married, "for gold,
"To make flesh of flesh, bone of bone:
"But, fairy, the ring thou hast sold,
"Hath made of our hearts stone of stone."
Alack! well a day, even Cupid's light wing
May turn into flint if it dip in the spring.

May. Sophy! In a word, you must leave me. I shall never get to my task.

Fel. What! hav'n't you done? I thought you'd been looking at Venus all this time; Venus and her wedding-rings? (*Rising.*) Pray, then, let me spy at the lady: one little peep, and I won't tease you a minute longer. How bright the star is;—but (*looking through glass*), good heart! now it seems all over spots.

May. Those spots are only to be seen through an excellent glass.

Fel. Dear me! sir, then how foolish it is in you to look at 'em.

May. Why, child, 'tis that folly which makes our wisdom.

Fel. 'Tis that makes the wisdom of the very wise, old, spectacled bachelor, who spends all his life discovering flaws and blots, whilst another woos and weds, and, looking only with his natural eye, sees to the end of his days, nothing but light.

May. Sophy! these words are—

Fel. My grandmother's; she'd a mortal aversion to old bachelors. Oh! there's the moon! Tell me; is it true, that love is made in the moon?

May. The moon is said to be inhabited, but—

Fel. Well, I meant the same thing. And is it true, that the people have faces like melons, bodies like grasshoppers, and voices like French horns?

May. I have made no such discovery. Thou'dst 'better judge for thyself. (*Leads her to telescope.*) Now, what dost thou see?

Fel. (*Looking through telescope.*) Mountains of diamonds—towns of gold—churches of crystal, and—oh! dear, there's a wedding! I can hear the bells, and see the white favours.

May. Thy uppermost wishes may imagine them; but, truly, now, what dost thou see?

Fel. Truly,—(*Coming from telescope.*)—now I see the moon bright, clear, and beautiful, a world of light; and now (*looking*

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through telescope), by the help of this most excellent glass, it looks like—

May. What?

Fel. A bowl of curds and whey—a fine figure of all thy future experience. For, pent up here alone, souring thyself in this dungeon, thou'lt think thou'rt discovering wondrous territories, unheard-of wealth; when, at the last, an old, wrinkled, solitary, tetchy bachelor, thou'lt look with the eyes of truth, and all thy wisdom will appear—mere curds and whey!

May. Nay, Sophy; this is no housekeeper's speech—there is a mystery in your words, actions, looks—(*Following her*).

Fel. (*Avoiding him, and taking book from shelf.*) What! do you read Tasso? (*Chaunts.*)

Intanto Erminia fra l'ombrose piante
D'antica selva, dal cavallo e scorta,
Ne piu governa il fren la man tremante,
E mezza quasi par tra viva e morta.

Isn't it beautiful Welch?

May. Welch?

Fel. Our curate—he'd been a great traveller—taught it me for Welch! But the stars, sir—the stars!

May. Thou hast too much perplexed me for the stars. We must—

Fel. (*Avoiding him, and placing chess-table between them.*) What! Do you play at chess?

May. Sometimes—but—now—

Fel. An excellent thing to discipline the mind—I play a little. (*Arranging the pieces.*)

May. Nay, my fair housekeeper, no evasion shall serve you. I must know your mystery.

Fel. (*Aside:* I have gone too far. How to escape?)

May. (*Holding* Felicia, *who struggles to get away.*) Come, confess, who and what you really are: confess,—I must have—

Enter Father Oliver, *with a lighted lamp.*

Fel. (*Disengaging herself.*) A light—very true, sir. I (*Getting towards the door, and securing the key.*)—I have placed the pieces, sir—father Oliver is come, and—good night, sir.

[*Exit: she is heard to lock the door.*

May. Stay!—she locks the door!

Oli. (*Rushing to door.*) Locked! (*Aside:* And in an instant they will be here! Destruction!)

[Oliver *and* Maynard *look confusedly at each other, and the scene closes.*

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Spacious Hall in the House of* MAYNARD.

Enter FELICIA.

Felicia. I have locked the door, and thus secured my retreat. I have been too precipitate: escape and secrecy are all I can now look for: so ends my hopeful comedy! Now, a perpetual bridle be upon my tongue, for its silly ambling! I—no, it is in vain to ponder,—home! home!—(*Approaching door: a knock.*) Can this be Benjamin? He may question—(*Another knock.*) yet I know no other outlet.—(*Opens door*—SOPHY *runs in.*) Sophy!

Sophy. My dear lady, I can't help it!—scold me, never speak to me, never think of me,—I can't help it!—I couldn't stop away, I—

Fel. At such an hour, Sophy?

Sophy. I couldn't get rid of that Simon; he watched me, and —(*Alarmed.*)—Hark! don't you hear something knocking?

Fel. (*Aside:* My prisoners above.) 'Tis nothing. (*Aside:* Yes, I may depend on her fidelity. She shall remain—'twill help the mystery.)

Sophy. (*Becoming more terrified.*) There, lady! I'm sure I heard the rustling of satin—white satin!

Fel. Sophy, be not a child; attend to me. I purpose leaving this house immediately.

Sophy. I thank goodness you do!

Fel. Yet, to perfect my plan, 'tis necessary that you take my place.

Sophy. I!

Fel. And more; the better to perplex Mr. Maynard, spite of all he may advance, declare that you, and you only, have been here all the time. I have locked him in his study; when I am safe away—why, Sophy, what makes you tremble and look so pale?

Sophy. I never could bring my mind to ghosts; and though to serve you, I—I—

Fel. What has possessed you? Ghosts!

Sophy. You don't know what a service this is. Six-and-twenty housekeepers since Michaelmas!

Fel. Sophy!

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Sophy. Sixteen took arsenic—seven went raving mad—five killed themselves like the farmer's daughter in the song,—and, for the remainder, they're to this day unaccounted for!

Fel. What idle gossip have you listened to?

Sophy. Don't say idle, ma'am; it all came through a person in black, with weepers,—one of the brothers! I ran here to tell you,—for if the spirits—

Fel. Spirits!

Sophy. Eight ghosts—four of 'em twin sisters, with flaxen hair down to their heels—all at midnight, go through the house,—some playing at hoop and some the harpsichord.

[*A knock*—SOPHY *shrieks, and falls on her knees, holding* FELICIA.

Fel. Silence! (*A knock.*)

Sophy. There!

Fel. Be not so weak—so foolish. At this hour, who can it be? (*Approaching door.*)

Sophy. (*Endeavouring to prevent her.*) Dear lady! you'll never—(*A third knock.*)

Voice without. "The white rose is a pretty flower!"

Sophy. So it is, but how droll to say so through a keyhole.

Fel. "The white rose"—"the white!"—Sophy, you have heard stories of this house?

Sophy. It's no house—it's a large brick coffin. I'm sure, the very curtains look like winding-sheets. Stories!

Fel. "The white rose!" That man, father Oliver,—there's craft in his looks—mystery in his words;—from France, too! I'll see this visitor, and then decide.

Sophy. You'll never open the door? We're poor women all alone—with nothing but our screams!

Fel. Be calm—be silent! Our lives, perhaps the lives of others, depend on your composure. If there be danger, I will protect you at my own suffering: but dear, good Sophy, by your love for me, be still!

Sophy. As a stone. We were born at the same time and why shouldn't we die at the same time? They may cut me to bits, I won't so much as squeak — won't say a word. Poor Simon! (*A knock.*)

Fel. Observe, and follow me in all things. (*A knock.*)

Voice without. "The white rose—"

[FELICIA *opens the door, when suddenly enter* LAVAL, DAGUERRE, *and others of the party.*

Lav. and Dag. Women!

Fel. (*Aside:* So many!) If you please, good gentlemen, who do you want?

Lav. Humph! You heard us knock often—heard us speak?

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Fel. Not a word.—Did you knock more than once? We ask pardon, but, sitting by the fire, we fell fast—fast asleep.

[*Yawning:* SOPHY *imitates her throughout the scene.*

Dag. Faith! such pretty chimney-figures might shorten a winter's night. Why, thou'rt not yet well awake; even now, there's time to win some gloves.

Fel. (*Repulses him.*) Hands—not gloves.

Lav. This must not be.—(*Aside to* DAGUERRE: Is this a time?) —(*To* FELICIA.) Father Oliver, can he not be seen?

Fel. He's busy—busy at, I think they call it chess, with Mr. Maynard.

Dag. And Benjamin?

Fel. He is out.

Dag. Out?

Fel. Sent somewhere on an errand by the father

Sophy. Yes—on an errand.

Fel. Shall I tell father Oliver all you gentlemen are here?

Lav. Stay. You've pretty faces for a riband;—here is a crown each. Now (*to* FELICIA), if unobserved by your master, you could hint to the father that some friends were waiting,—

Fel. Then master mus'n't know it?

Lav. Why, now, I warrant me, you yourselves have sometimes a friend at the fireside you wouldn't have your master told of?

Fel. Yes—often.

Sophy. Every Sunday.

Lav. 'Tis even so with father Oliver.—You understand?

Fel. Oh, yes—(*Aside:* Doubt becomes certainty. I will at every hazard, stay and watch them.) Dear heart, gentlemen! if the father had but trusted me—had but told me you were coming to supper,—

Lav. As for supper—

Fel. I don't believe we've a drop of wine in the house—(*To* SOPHY)—Child, run down to the cellar, and—

Sophy. (*Alarmed—Aside to* FELICIA: The cellar! Why, that cellar—)

Fel. (*Aside to* SOPHY: Hush! I'll see to it myself.)

Lav. By no means,—we will not trouble you.

Sophy. And I know there's not a drop.—Now, I remember I dare say, Mr. Oliver has sent out Benjamin for wine and supper too.—I shouldn't—(*A knock*—SOPHY *screams.*) Mercy on us!

Fel. (*To* SOPHY.) Art out of thy wits?—More of the company, I dare say. (*Going to door.*)

Lav. Stay; should it be any of your master's friends,—if we are seen,—

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Fel. His friends! He sees nobody—hasn't a friend in the world.—(*They all retire, as* FELICIA *opens the door.*)

Enter BIN, *carrying a hamper of wine.*

Bless me—what is all this?

Bin. (*Slightly intoxicated.*) Wine, red-lips; wine! If there's a corkscrew at hand, I'll tell you the quality.

Fel. But who sent it here?

Bin. A gentleman.

Fel. Art sure?

Bin. Who but a gentleman could do such things?

Sophy. But when—and how—and who?—

Bin. My little love, my profession is the profession of a pack-horse—not to ask, or to answer, but to carry. Read the direction—(*Offering card*)—Am I right?

Fel. (*Preventing* SOPHY—*and returning card.*) It's enough to make a body blush, sir;—but we—we wer'n't taught to read.

Bin. No! I should have thought four such eyes could do anything without teaching. Well, some have beauty, some have learning. I won't brag of my beauty,—but—but—I'll read the direction. (*Reads.*) "Mr. Maynard, Bird-cage"—(*looking at* FELICIA *and* SOPHY)—very pretty birds—"Walk, St. James's Park." Am I right?

Fel. Quite right: and sent here by a gentleman?

Bin. Though I didn't see him, every bottle cries, "a gentleman!"—You hav'n't a corkscrew?

Fel. Not such a thing in the house.—There, good night.

Bin. Good night.—(*Pauses—comes down between them.*)—First, I have a serious word to you.

Fel. and Sophy. To us!

Bin. Something about your future peace of mind.

Fel. Well?—(*Both* FELICIA *and* SOPHY *listen anxiously.* DAGUERRE *and* LAVAL *are seen listening at back.*

Bin. You are young, very pretty, and may get husbands. Now—are you attending?

Both. Yes—yes.

Bin. It's worth attention; for it's something come to my mind from the dreadful state of this house. If you would have your husbands—for I know what men are,—if you would have your husbands love, worship, honour, and respect you,—never, never—

Both. Never?

Bin. Never be without a corkscrew.

Sophy. Is that all?

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Bin. Don't shun good advice. I feel I speak as a father; for if I'd twenty marrying daughters, these should be my solemn words to each—"Never be without a corkscrew!"

[FELICIA *sees* BIN *out at door.*—LAVAL, DAGUERRE, &c. *show themselves.*

Fel. You see, gentlemen, father Oliver has not forgotten you. Benjamin—

Lav. But may not this be sent to your master? May he not expect friends?

Fel. Wine for master—wine for fishes, they'd as soon drink it. And for friends, they're all upon his bookshelves. No: this is all Benjamin's doing, and like him; he's so sly and close, he won't trust any body; else I'd have had all things to rights. But come, Sophy!

Lav. How long have you been servant here?

Fel. Housekeeper, sir.—Not long; this (*Pointing to* SOPHY,) is my cousin: the place is so dull she came to sit with me. But we won't talk now. Sophy, here, take the wine into that room. —(*Giving her two of the bottles—Aside to her.*—Be prudent—be calm!) That room—the gentlemen will follow you.

Lav. In, gentlemen.

Sophy. (*Endeavouring to conceal her terror.*)—This way, if you please.—(*Two of the party take up the hamper.*)—Thank ye, gentlemen; this—(*Aside:* I can't speak—I feel as if I'd a wet feather drawn about my throat;—this way, sirs;)—(*To* FELICIA.)—you'll come directly, cousin? Gentlemen,—this —dear Simon!—(*She goes off, curtseying, surrounded by conspirators.*)

Lav. Now, my pretty maid—father Oliver,—

Fel. I'll run directly.

Lav. Caution.

Fel. Bless you, I know how to cheat master.—(*Going—comes back.*) I say, if when he is sound asleep, we could have a little dance?

Lav. It may be—but quick.

Fel. You promise then?—I'll go.—(*Aside:* I see it all; conspiracy—treason! At any venture he must be saved.) Now, mind, 'tis a bargain between us? a dance—when he's asleep, you know, a little dance? [*Exit.*

Dag. Must we decide? Is this our last meeting?

Lav. The last: Layer has his men ready—all our friends are staunch; father Oliver has received king James's declaration of right to the English crown; he is to-night to read it to us, and furnish copies for secret circulation.

Dag. I could have liked some other place of rendezvous.

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Lav. In this lies our safety. In matters such as ours the boldest conduct is the surest. Whilst they look abroad for treason, we securely spring the mine beneath their feet. Come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—MAYNARD'S *Study.*—MAYNARD *and* OLIVER *discovered, playing at chess.*

Oli. (*With suppressed anxiety—listening.*) There!—surely it is her foot on the staircase?

May. I was wont to have a nice ear for such music—yet I distinguish nothing. Tut! why should we listen? The move, father—the move! Have a care; or, pupil as I am, you'll lose. Come! when it is her good pleasure to unlock the door, the door will be unlocked. Why, father, I shall fain think thou hast missed some delicate appointment.

Oli. Sir!

May. Thou dost take this girlish frolic so gravely. Have we not sat whole nights at the game; and now, half an hour wearies you.

Oli. I am moved that a servant should presume—

May. Poor thing! 'tis her simplicity.—(*Aside:* I would she'd come! All my senses are in a whirl! Her eye has such inborn intelligence—her voice, so expressive in its sweet depth—her hands—her step!—nothing is vulgar, yet nothing artificial. Who can she be? Well,—time, time!) Now, father.

Oli. You play well, sir—very well.—(*Playing.*)

May. Not so. (*Playing.*) You are too easy with me.

Oli. No, indeed; you now send me to my studies. (*Aside:* I can scarce master myself! At so nice a moment,—if they come —and the girl,—) (*Catches the eye of* MAYNARD, *and returns to the play.*)

May. Nay, you cast the game away. See!

Oli. I told you, I must now learn of you. Ha!

May. What! you spy the victory?

Oli. No, I—yes, I think I see the game. (*Aside:* She is here.)

Enter FELICIA *at door.*

Fel. (*To* MAYNARD.) Did you ring, sir?

May. Sophy! (*Aside:* My breath flies away at her voice.) Yes, yes, I rang. (*Aside:* Now, to lose the game, and get him away.)

Oli. (*Aside:* I dare not leave them alone; I must first know,

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—they whisper! Is she really so simple? Are they come? Can accident?—Befall what may, I am armed, and gone so far, will leave no point to chance!)

May. Now, father? (*Aside:* Plague on his hesitation!)

Oli. You never showed such skill.

May. I see—it will be tedious: we will resume to-morrow. (*Rising.*)

Oli. Your pardon—I shall beat you now. (*Playing.*)

May. (*Aside:* Is there no way of losing?) (*Playing.*) There!

Fel. (*Who stands at the table, to* MAYNARD, *at the same time casting an enquiring glance at* OLIVER.) Ha! your king's in danger!

Oli. (*Starting.*) What?—(FELICIA *points, with an air of simplicity, to* MAYNARD'S *play.*) True! (*Aside:* Yet could she speak another meaning?) I am prepared.—(*Narrowly observing* MAYNARD, *and half rising from his chair, as he plays.*) That was bold play; I move thus, and—

Fel. (*Rapidly moving a piece on the board.*)—Checkmate! (OLIVER, *confused, sinks into his chair*—FELICIA, *forcing a laugh.*) Ha! ha! Sir, you have missed the game.

May. Excellent! Why, Sophy, where did you learn chess?

Fel. Chess! La, I've been tired of it many a night.—A lady down with us—an old lady from the Indies—taught me chess to keep her company.

Oli. Indeed!

Fel. Poor soul! she was rheumatic and bedridden, and 'twas her only comfort. Chess, chess, chess; I used to sit day after day, night after night, that—I declare, even now I can't look at these tiresome bits of bone without yawning.

May. For the first time they have wearied me. Father, good night; I shall read for an hour or less, and then, to-bed. (*Seats himself at table, takes book, and impatiently watches* FELICIA.) —Good night.

Fel. (*Taking candle from table, and affecting to light it for* OLIVER.—*Aside to him:* They are come.)

Oli. They!

Fel. (*Aside to him:* Don't be afraid, they've made a friend of me; I'm the last to tell tales of a fellow-servant.)

Oli. Tales!

Fel. Why should masters know every thing? You have your friends to sup one night; I'll have mine another.

Oli. Oh! then they owned they came to sup?

Fel. But I vowed not to tell master;—we're to have a dance, and—come along, we'll be so merry!

May. Sophy, wait, I have a word to say to you.

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Fel. To me, sir? (*Aside to* OLIVER: I'll get away from him directly.)

Oli. He may follow.

Fel. (*Aside to* OLIVER: He shan't; for if it must be, I'll once more turn the lock.)

May. Sophy!

Fel. I never did see such a candle—Yes, sir.—(*Giving light to* OLIVER.) Good night, sir. (*Aside to him:* I'll come, directly.) (*Curtseying him to the door.*) Sweet rest to you, sir.

Oli. (*Aside:* Yet, I'll make sure, and quickly send them hence.) Sir, good night. [*Exit at door.*

May. (*Embracing* FELICIA.) And now, confess, fair mystery, or I'll put your lips to the torture.

Fel. Confess, sir! What, have you lost anything?

May. Yes, in faith—lost myself!

Fel. Lud! you frightened me! I feared you had missed some of the spoons!

May. (*Holding her.*) Your history, my beautiful enigma! Disclose! I'd fain be merciful, yet have I strange thoughts of cruelty!

Fel. I am—I am your prisoner.

May. So! then the gaoler may take his fees.

Fel. Hath the turnkey done his office?

May. (*Locking and barring door.*) As wise as fair.

Fel. Is't fast? Art sure that we are—

May. The Cyclops, with their hammers, could not force it. And now, with such a guard, let bliss—(*She avoids him.*) —Nay, this morning, I was a dull, blind student—a man of marble; but thou hast fired the statue into life, and now I am—

Fel. (*Repulsing him, and with energy.*) A gentleman!—still a gentleman.

May. (*Aside:* This is not art; no, the mind gives a sterner beauty to her face. Her eye is clear and cold as starlight; and her lip, so sudden white, speaks in its paleness. Tears!) As you say, I hope, still a gentleman—nay, more; a gentleman, so frozen by your reproof, that I fear, even Cupid's bow and arrows, kindled for firewood, might fail to thaw me.

Fel. (*Aside:* Shall I tell all? I feel as yet, I dare not—His rashness might destroy him; first let them quit the house, and then—)

May. (*Placing chairs.*) Sit, Sophy—(*They sit,* FELICIA *endeavours to control her anxiety.*) Now, you have some history?

Fel. Who has not?

May. Yours should be happiness. Might I write the future, trust me it should be blithe.

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Fel. Indeed?

May. Indeed. (*Aside:* How her voice winds into my heart!) Your coming here, is it not some jest—some desire to laugh at me? Surely, fortune never drove you hither?

Fel. It was my fortune.

May. Impossible. Come, own it was a frolic? You were set on: No? Your friends—I mean, your parents, know they not?—

Fel. At nine years old I was an orphan.

May. Poor Sophy! so far our present fates accord. I am myself a solitary thing, without a single relative.

Fel. Without one?

May. Without one.

Fel. Not one?

May. Stay—I believe I have a cousin; but cousins, you know, go for nothing.

Fel. True.

May. Still, your history? I listen, as I would hear a tale of fairy land. Your parents dead, there must be, at least some one, to whom you owe a debt.

Fel. Oh, yes! a deep, dear debt. I was a careless child when it was contracted, yet did the obligation make me, as with a charm, a thoughtful creature. To this hour no day has passed that I have not remembered it—loved it—held myself the richer that I owed it,—would not have cancelled it for all the power of queens!

May. (*Aside:* What eloquent sweetness?) Your creditor was paid, with a dear usury, in such thoughts. Such a debtor must—

Fel. I fear he never thought of her.

May. He! he! (*Aside:* But now, I was a flame; and that monosyllable hath turned me into lead. Why should it—what is it to me? (*Looking round.*) Curse the place, it never looked such a dungeon. I—that little word has damnable magic! I seem to read nothing but *he*,—the very busts are opening their stony mouths to cry *he!*) Well, Sophia.

Fel. Sophia?

May. Sophy—still Sophy. You, it seems, have not forgotten? You love him—him—yet?

Fel. I have not forgotten.

May. Do not forget—but do not love.

Fel. Why not?

May. For my sake, do not.

Fel. Your sake?

May. I love you!

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Fel. Sidney!—Sir.

May. Love you with honour.—Will, for I feel it is my fate give up all for you.

Fel. What? Your books?

May. For that rarer volume, your loving heart.

Fel. Your telescopes?

May. For that diviner light, your loving eyes: in that I'll hourly read, in them I'll gaze, and make the best happiness the truest wisdom.

Fel. You know not all my history?

May. No,—but know enough.

Fel. It may be a riddle.

May. I'll marry you, trusting to that fair face for a clear solution.

Fel. Indeed, I may deceive you.

May. Then truth is but a sound. Deceit *is* in the world: I have found it, found it so fair, it well nigh made me sceptical of all beside. Yet, at the fairest, was it no more to the spirit shining through you, than is the light of fens to the pure and lasting diamond. I—were I to talk whole days, I could say no more than this,—but in it say my heart and soul—I love you, Sophy—I love you!

[*Falling on his knees.—Violent knocking at door.*

Pur. (*Without.*) Good father solitary. Monsieur Unit! open the door!

Fel. (*In great agitation.*) They are here! For your life, do not—pray do not! (*Knocking.*)

May. Tom Purple! What mad intrusion!

Fel. (*Aside:* I should have prepared him—my fears, no, my selfishness, hath ruined all!)

Pur. (*Without.*) Open, Sir Eremite! I charge ye, by your iron girdle, death's head, and cross bones, lift the latch, and let poor pilgrims in!

May. (*To* Felicia.) Do not tremble—do not fear—he is a friend.

Fel. Oh no! for my sake, do not trust him;—from yonder window, is there no escape?

May. Escape? Nay, Sophy, I feel the delicacy of your fears. Retire into yonder room: 'tis father Oliver's; a few minutes will rid me of him. He is, I say, a friend—a tried noble friend.

Fel. Is he known to father Oliver?

May. Known; but I fear me, little esteemed.

Pur. (*Knocking without.*) What! friar Bacon, if dumb thyself, let thy brazen head discourse!

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May. In, Sophy, in!

[*He puts her in room on upper side, she anxiously watches at door.*

Pur. (*Without.*) Sidney Maynard! Sidney!

[MAYNARD *opens door, when enter* PURPLE, *intoxicated, holding* FATHER OLIVER—FELICIA *glides into balcony.*

Pur. So! your hospitable door hath well nigh stripped my knuckles.

May. Nay, Tom, at this time! What could have brought you here?

[*During the following,* FELICIA *is seen to enter the room, and at intervals to appear watching and listening at door.*

Pur. Your house-warming. There are a few friends—

May. Now, Tom, go home; my house is in no state for guests.

Pur. I knew your poverty and prepared for it. I sent such a hamper!—There's wine enough below to make a bath for Bacchus and Ariadne!

May. Indeed, you perplex me! I am not furnished with—

Pur. (*Holding* OLIVER, *who endeavours to get away.*) No! Of course you don't drink, but you shall stop and draw the corks.

Oli. (*Aside:* By this time they must be from the house.—All I see is safe with him.)

May. Seriously, Purple, what could bring you here?

Pur. Your housekeeper! I wrote to Derbyshire for a sybil; and—ha! ha!—up comes a Flora.

May. Surely, you have not seen?—

Pur. Seen her and heard her! And then her lips!

May. Lips?

Pur. Oh, hay-fields and a murmuring brook!

May. Lips! You did not forget?—

Pur. Certainly not: I kissed her of course.

May. Kissed! And she?—

Pur. Acknowledged the attention. (*To* OLIVER.) No, you don't stir. Never look so grim, Sid! There are fourteen rare lads—they'll all be here.

May. Here!

Pur. I wouldn't take you by surprise—I ran on and left 'em to follow—they'll—(*Voices are heard below.*) Huzza! Here they are! (*Voices below sing and shout.*)

May. Purple, this vexes me!—I insist—Father, tell the gentlemen, I am out—in bed—cannot see them.

Voices. (*Without.*) Mr. Maynard. Mr. Maynard! Is he at home?

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Fel. (*Looking over the balcony.*) Yes, gentlemen ;—yes !

Pur. (*Seeing* FELICIA.) What ! Another woman ! and—(*To* MAYNARD.)—"I am making certain calculations, and to night Venus will"—Oh, my dear Mogul !

May. Pshaw ! This young person is the housekeeper—the same you—kissed.

Pur. No—that young person's below !

May. Below !

Fel. Yes—she's my cousin.

May. So, Sophy, you have some relations ?

Fel. No, sir ; for you know cousins go for nothing.

May. (*Aside:* I am lost in doubt and—) (*Noise without.*)

Pur. (*Going to balcony.*) Wait a minute, brave lads ; good fellows ; rare boys ! The door shall be opened.

May. It shall not. Mr. Purple, let me have some authority in my own house.

Pur. Have the purest despotism ; I have the key. (*Showing it.*) Oh, I was no sooner master of the citadel than I secured the gates. No soul comes in or departs without the new governor's permission !

Oli. (*Aside:* 'Sdeath ! they are still here, then.)

Fel. (*Aside:* Happy adventure ! He is saved.)

Pur. I ran against old sanctity, here, coming to the door, and brought him up, for fear of any trick. (*Noise without.*) I'm coming, lads.

May. Mr. Purple, I wish to hold your friendship ; that I may do so, I insist on privacy.

Fel. (*To* MAYNARD.) La, sir, why not let the gentlemen come in ?

Pur. Hearken to wisdom ! There are but fourteen.

Fel. To be sure, had we known, we might have been prepared. (*Aside to* MAYNARD: Let them enter.) Still, we can manage very nicely.

Pur. Hear her, Sidney ! hear her ! Every word's a jewel.—(*Knocking without.*) I'm coming, lads ; I'm coming. Mr. Maynard, I wish to keep your friendship, but I must—yes, I must—keep the key. Ha ! ha ! Coming, lads. (*Knocking without.*) [*Exit.*

May. This must not pass. Father, follow me.

Fel. Nay, let the gentlemen enter.

May. Would it give you so much satisfaction ? Would it be —oh, Sophy ! Come, sir. [*Exit, with* OLIVER.

Fel. Yet he is saved ! These papers, found in my hurried search in that room, declare all ;—a treasonable correspondence with the Pretender ! How to dispose of them ? If the men leave the house, some after circumstance may implicate

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Maynard: if secured by his means, and with them these proofs, his innocence is placed beyond all question. I will declare to him his danger: the visitors, so happily arrived, are numerous. Stay! could I but convey these proofs! (*Looking from balcony.*) Ha! I cannot mistake—'tis Simon! He sees me! (*Leaning over balcony.*) Good fellow, hasten—for life or death is in your speed—to the guard-house; present these papers (*Throwing out packet.*)—not a word,—but, fly! He is gone! Still, there may be other documents! Yet—yet an instant. [*Exit into room.*

SCENE III.—*Apartment in the house of* MAYNARD. *Door in scene and doors at the sides.*

Enter SOPHY *and* WIDOW DUCKLING.

Sophy. Dear me! Mrs. Duckling, who'd have looked for such treatment from your old sweetheart, the exciseman? What reason could he give.

Widow. Reason! I'll tell you. We had courted, as you know, for ten years. For ten years, every evening had he smoked and drunk at my fireside, his dear little piebald pony tied up at the garden gate. Well! so we went on, as you know, until I was sent for to London. And then, didn't my gentleman come galloping to me?—and didn't he, taking hold of my hand, with his face the colour of starch,—didn't he beg, and groan, that I'd consent? My heart wasn't a cinder, child; I said I'd marry the fellow.

Sophy. What else could you do, you know?

Widow. I invited all my gossips—hired a fiddle—made the wedding-cake. The morning came! Oh, you should have seen me drest! Well, we waited and waited, and no bridegroom. I sat on nettles for two hours. At last,—

Sophy. The exciseman came?

Widow. No; but he sent a little scapegrace boy to say—what do you think?—to say he had inquired about my property!

Sophy. La! what did you say?

Widow. I said nothing. I thought the waggon might move him, so I took my place. Would you believe it, the villain let me come off?

Sophy. And never followed you?

Widow. Not a step: for all I sat down at the tail of the waggon, and for three whole days, eating nothing but my wedding-cake, I watched and watched for the least glimpse of a piebald nag. Oh! if my dear first husband knew how I'd been served 'twould bring the dear man from his grave.

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Sophy. It's a good thing he doesn't know it.

Widow. It is a blessed thing! Oh, Sophy, while you live despise the man who inquires about your property. But tell me, child, this is a nice place, isn't it? You'll give it up quietly, because 'twas all a mistake?

Sophy. Give it up? that I will!

Widow. I came away, early as it was, directly I got down at the Talbot, and—(*Laughing within.*) Dear me! there are those rakish gentlemen, who met me in the Park, and when I asked them for this house, said they were going to it, and brought me here.

Sophy. (*Aside:* Where can my dear lady be!) [*They retire.*

Enter MAYNARD, PURPLE, *and two* Gentlemen.

May. Gentlemen, I repeat, this visit is ill-timed. I would be alone.

Pur. My dear Maynard, you are alone. There was a fine body of fourteen, but you kept 'em so long at the door, they dwindled away, and now you have nothing but the skeleton. To think the dogs should have skulked away in this fashion!

1*st Gent.* Shameful! All of 'em married, too. A bachelor may have his reasons for slipping off; but a married man, who knows the worst—it's pusillanimous. Where's the wine?

Pur. (*To* SOPHY.) Come, pretty one—where's the hamper?

Sophy. Why, sir, your friends—that is, Mr. Oliver's friends—

May. Mr. Oliver's friends! Whom mean you?

Sophy. The gentlemen—(what shall I say?)—in that room.

May. In that room?

Pur. (*Looking through key-hole of door in scene.*) A snug party of some dozen, i'faith! We'll join 'em.

May. Stay. I know not what to think; I will myself question him. Purple, go with your friends into that apartment. (WIDOW DUCKLING *curtseys to* MAYNARD.) Pshaw! Take with you these women. (PURPLE *and* Gentlemen *take* SOPHY *and* WIDOW *into room.*) Be attentive—I may need you! A hundred former thoughts rush back upon me: words, looks, gestures, now considered, are grounds of strong suspicion.

Enter FELICIA.

Sophy!

Fel. You are betrayed! Your life, your honour in peril. Where are your friends?

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May. In that room.

[FATHER OLIVER *is coming from room in scene—when he pauses on seeing them.*

Fel. At this moment, there are traitors beneath your roof: they, if you would clear yourself, must be secured. I have proofs, written proofs of treason! Father Oliver—

[OLIVER *having beckoned* DAGUERRE, LAVAL, *and others from the inner room—they stand with drawn swords.*

Oli. Demands them!

Fel. Ha!

[*Rushes into opposite room;* OLIVER *and all are following, when* MAYNARD *throws himself before the door.*

May. Villains!

Oli. Gentlemen, an accident—a fatality shall I call it—has disclosed our plans. Yet, be firm, and we are safe. Mr. Maynard, we must secure that woman.

May. I am unarmed; but not, whilst I have life, shall you lay hand upon her!

Lav. Shall we have your friendship? Cry, long live king James, and join us.

May. Traitors!

Oli. We lose precious moments: force that door.

May. Villains! Help!

[*The party struggle with* MAYNARD, *and drag him from the door;* PURPLE *and* Gentlemen *are overpowered as they enter.* MAYNARD *is mastered by two of the conspirators, who stand over him, with their swords, when* FELICIA *enters from room and falls upon his neck.*

Fel. Cousin!

May. Cousin!

Oli. Gentlemen, we are your masters: be wise, we will not abuse our power. (*To* FELICIA:) His cousin are you? I see it all—you love him. Give up those papers; or, before he can speak a prayer, he is a dead man.

May. Felicia! dear Felicia, never! I can die; live you, and bear witness to my honour.

Pur. Rascals! my ghost shall be at Tyburn on your hanging day.

Oli. Gentlemen, your swords at his throat. Now, those papers!

Fel. (*Aside:* I cannot save him! I have lost the means.)

Oli. Shall we strike?—the word?

May. Fear not for me, Felicia; save yourself.

Oli. That may not be so easy. Mr. Maynard, our stake is no child's play: if she remain obstinate, she too may suffer.

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May. You cannot mean it? Murder, in cold blood—assassinate a woman? Are ye gentlemen—are ye human creatures? Kill me—torture me—strike every sword here through me—I yield myself to your most malicious cruelty!—But, if ye have one tender thought, one hope, one grace of manhood,—hurt not my cousin,—touch not my sweet, sweet Felicia!

Oli. Will she give the papers?

May. No!—(*They are about to strike.*)

Fel. Yes: I will give them.

Oli. Where are they?

Fel. I—(*Aside:* What shall I say?)—I have them not here.

Oli. Where are they?

Fel. There!—

[*An* Officer, (*with a party of soldiers with fixed bayonets,*) *enters from room at side—conspirators throw down their swords.*

Officer. (*To* MAYNARD, PURPLE, *and* Gentlemen:) You, gentlemen, although the situation in which I find you is proof sufficient of your innocence, may yet be called upon for further explanation. For these traitors, secure and remove them.

[OLIVER, *and the rest of his party are guarded off.*

May. To what blessed chance do we owe this rescue?

Enter SIMON BOX.

Simon. To the lady Felicia and myself. I have watched your house, nearly all night: for, to say the truth, I liked not its looks. I was staring at yonder window, when my lady here saw me, cast out the papers, and—but I forget—I have two prisoners of my own in this room; one is lawful plunder, and I'll run and take possession. [*Exit.*

Pur. Maynard, in my sober senses, I wish you joy.

May. (*To* FELICIA.) And you are my cousin?

Fel. Knew you not the little girl, whom eight years ago you snatched from out the river?

May. Happy diver, to have brought up such a pearl!

Enter SIMON BOX *and* SOPHY.

But who is this—a cousin too?

Fel. She is my earliest, my truest friend. It is to her I owe the scheme that brought me hither. 'Twas she who was to keep your house.

Enter WIDOW DUCKLING.

Widow. A little mistake, sir. I am the person, and I can tell you the whole story—

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May. Another time; I can hear no stories now: I can only wonder.

Fel. (*Aside to* SOPHY.) Sophy, take back your ring; and with it for your truth and service—competence.

Sophy. Dear lady, if you would but keep that gown and cap!

May. Keep them! I'll have them placed within a crystal shrine for bachelors to make a pilgrimage to honour.

Widow. But, sweet sir—here is the letter from London to our curate—you will see that I am the person to keep your house.

May. You shall not wholly lose your journey; but there is another lady, who, as I hope, will have the place you were to fill; if she look yes, why, then, be all welcome to my house-warming; for here, behold my wife—the best HOUSEKEEPER!

END OF "THE HOUSEKEEPER."

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THE WEDDING GOWN.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

Matthew Lubeski	MR. COOPER.
Boeswing	MR. FARREN.
Clarendon	MR. KING.
Effingham	MR. BRINDAL.
Creamly	MR. WEBSTER.
Junket	MR. MEADOWS.
Valise	MR. WOOD.
Augusta	MISS PHILLIPS.
Margaret	MISS TAYLOR.
Lady Aubrey	MRS. FAUCIT.
Mrs. Fossil	MRS. C. JONES.

Servants.

SCENE—*London.* DATE, 1796.

This Comedy was first represented on the 2nd of January, 1834.

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THE WEDDING GOWN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—MATTHEW LUBESKI'S *Lodgings in the House of* CREAMLY.

Enter MRS. FOSSIL *and* JUNKET.

Mrs. Fossil. I knew they were both out. And now, boy, your news?

Junket. News, mother-in-law?

Mrs. F. Again? Mother-in-law! If your father did marry me, thank providence for it, and hold your tongue.

Junk. I do thank providence. (*Aside:* It might have been *my* fate. Poor father!)

Mrs. F. A pretty charge he left me; and prettily I'm repaid. Good-for-nothing! How have I brought you up?

Junk. Like a top; and kept me up by the same means.

Mrs. F. Scapegrace! How got you your reading and writing?—

Junk. You know how: cleaning door-plates and carrying letters.

Mrs. F. Your board—your clothes—your lodging?

Junk. For my board, I never ate a dinner with a quiet conscience.

Mrs. F. You felt your unworthiness.

Junk. No; I felt I was robbing the house-dog of his lawful property. For my clothes, the boys used to call me harlequin; and, for my lodging, 'twould have been excellent, if—

Mrs. F. If?—

Junk. If I'd been one of the pigeons. To be sure, my sleeping-place had this advantage,—I sometimes got an egg for breakfast.

Mrs. F. This is to foster other people's brats! And who has put you in your present service?

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Junk. I'm not ungrateful. Since you've kept house for Mr. Creamly, 'tis true I'm become a judge of roast and boiled.—I own, I know what a snug garret is; wear a coat of one colour, and can, on holidays, risk a sixpence at ninepins.

Mrs. F. And if you'd keep these comforts, see that you obey me closely. Now, your news? When Miss Augusta left the house this morning, you followed her wherever she went?

Junk. No I didn't.

Mrs. F. No! I desired you to follow her.

Junk. I know it; and I tried to do so, but—

Mrs. F. But!—but you hadn't brains enough for so simple a business.

Junk. Quite the other way; I stopped, in fear of my brains. Patience, mother-in-law; you shall hear. I followed Miss Augusta from the house; slunk and winded after her like a hound; till, by-and-by, I began to think myself not much better. Then I lost sight of her—then I spied her again. In the midst of this, something said to me, "Ralph Junket, this is poor work for a man." Yet I went on, though I seemed to myself to get smaller every step I took.

Mrs. F. Fool!

Junk. Not a fool, mother-in-law. For what I then felt taught me this secret: if ever I hear of a great man shrinking down to a very little one, I shall know he's been on some dirty errand, and lost his height upon the road.

Mrs. F. Then you quitted the girl?

Junk. Not till I discovered—

Mrs. F. Well?—

Junk. 'Twas at the corner of a street—

Mrs. F. Aye?—

Junk. When walking rather briskly, I looked up, and saw that Miss Augusta—

Mrs. F. Yes?—

Junk. Saw *me.* As she looked—at that instant—I felt two red-hot cinders shot into my cheeks! I twirled round on my toe, and, never once trusting myself to glance back, came with a scorched face at full gallop home.

Mrs. F. And this was all your success?

Junk. I tell you 'twas success I had to fear. If I'd prospered in this first piece of dirtiness, I might have grown conceited, and gone on. And now, mother-in-law, are you not ashamed?

Mrs. F. Boy!

Junk. To set a boy to such a task? Watch Miss Augusta! Bless her! Look in her face—hear her speak. I'll be bound she has nothing secret but her prayers.

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Mrs. F. Indeed! Yet what should call her from the house so often—what, particularly when her father's out, should keep her from home so long?

Junk. It may be business; it may be pleasure; it may be—what is't to us what it may be?

Mrs. F. Everything. Hav'n't they lodged here these sixteen weeks; and what do we know of them?

Junk. We know Miss Augusta to be the meekest, sweetest thing; and for the old gentleman, her father, why he was a nobleman in Poland, in his own country.

Mrs. F. The more simpleton he to leave it. I should like to know what he does here.

Junk. I've told you. Mr. Lubeski is a—a patriot. Now don't you know?

Mrs. F. I know it can't be very reputable; for I've looked all through the dictionary and found no such business.

Junk. Business! I tell you, mother-in-law, it isn't—

Mrs. F. No matter what it is; it doesn't seem a ready-money calling. Patriot! I only hope all the linen's safe. But now I'm here, I'll have a general search.

Junk. You'll search alone, then. Fie! fie upon you!

Mrs. F. Fie! How do I know what's going on? Dear Mr. Creamly may be robbed,—or—

Junk. Dear Mr. Creamly! Mrs. Fossil, you know you have already had three husbands; and yet do I suspect—

Mrs. F. Suspect! What?

Junk. You are now curling your hair for the fourth. Dear Mr. Creamly! Poor Mr. Creamly!

Mrs. F. You vile—scandalising!—but you sha'n't spoil my temper.

Junk. Nobody can; it's so preserved in its own vinegar. Entrap Mr. Creamly! Such a good soul! No: he's my master, and I'm bound to take care of him: so, mother-in-law, once for all I tell you, I sha'n't stand by and suffer it.

[*Exit at door.*

Mrs. F. I'm rightly served; and yet when I brought him into the house, I—I did expect—but he shall pack. I'll have no eavesdropping, overlooking—stay, I forget my errand. If I could find anything about these lodgers—any letters—anything that might serve to throw a light upon their way of life,—

Enter CREAMLY.

Mrs. F. Ha! dear Mr. Creamly! What a way you have of surprising one!

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Creamly. Junket told me you were here. But, bless me, Mrs. Fossil, these are the lodgers' rooms; let us go down stairs.

Mrs. F. Lodgers! Ah, Mr. Creamly!

Cream. Lackaday! Anything the matter?

Mrs. F. These are serious times.

Cream. Mercy me! What's happened?

Mrs. F. To-day again bread's gone up a penny; and the chicken I bought yesterday for your morning's broth—a little thing that it was a murder to kill—cost two-and-sixpence.

Cream. Surely! But the lodgers?

Mrs. F. Then a calf's-foot for jelly, 'tisn't to be looked at under—

Cream. The lodgers, Mrs. Fossil? What has bread, chicken, or calf's-foot jelly to do with the lodgers?

Mrs. F. All things, Mr. Creamly. For if you'd pay for necessary sustenance, how are you to lodge outlandish folks for nothing?

Cream. That's very true: I must speak to Mr. Lubeski. 'Twas but last night at the club, Mr. Bull, the president, twitted me for harbouring foreigners.

Mrs. F. Mr. Bull was always a very sensible gentleman. Sir, you don't know your danger. Here are you, a respectable silk-mercer, keeping people who may be smugglers.

Cream. What! Miss Augusta?

Mrs. F. I don't know that she hasn't a smuggling look. Smugglers, or coiners, or—

Cream. Well, if they are coiners, at least they have some conscience; for I've never seen the colour of their money.

Mrs. F. 'Tisn't for me to speak; yet, sir, I can't see you devoured and be quiet.

Cream. I know the pains you take. I—you recollect the white satin I showed you on Tuesday?

Mrs. F. That beautiful satin!

Cream. I told you it was ordered by Madame Millechoses, the milliner, for a wedding-suit. Now, there's a remnant of a few yards left, and if, as a small token, Mrs. Fossil—hark! Isn't there somebody?

Mrs. F. Not a soul. Yes, sir, a remnant?

Cream. We'll talk down stairs. If Mr. Lubeski should find anybody in his room—

Mrs. F. His room! Take my word for it, sir, that Mr. Lubeski—

Enter MATTHEW LUBESKI.

A good day to you, sir.

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Lubeski. Good day. You were speaking of me.

Mrs. F. Yes, sir; I was saying to Mr. Creamly, that you being out, I had looked in to see if all things were as they should be.

Lub. I am your debtor for much kindness.

Mrs. F. (*Aside to* CREAMLY: He forgets the sixteen weeks' rent. Ask him for it.)

Cream. (*Aside to* MRS. FOSSIL: Leave us,—I think I will.)

Mrs. F. (*Aside to* CREAMLY: Think! Be sure you do.) Plague take him for coming as he did! for there must be some meaning in a gift of white satin. [*Exit.*

Cream. (*Aside:* I wish he didn't look so much of the gentleman.) Any news from abroad, sir?

Lub. I am sorry, Mr. Creamly, I have as yet received none.

Cream. When may any be looked for?

Lub. Daily, as I hope. But the present condition of the country—

Cream. Very bad, no doubt. Ruin to business. Pray, what trades may now flourish best in Poland?

Lub. Just now, there are but three profitable callings.

Cream. What may they be?

Lub. Spy—gaoler—and executioner.

Cream. You mistake. I mean, what are your exports?

Lub. Brave men—virtuous women—and innocent children.

Cream. That's your meaning. I ask as a tradesman. How do landlords get their rents? You used to export hemp and iron.

Lub. Yes; but now they are all consumed at home. Mr. Creamly, I have expected, do yet hope, the means of meeting your demand. At present, I—I must blush to beg for further time. Things have gone most crossly. I may seem a rogue—an adventurer; do not think so. On the word of a gentleman, I —Mr. Creamly, I am a soldier; and, so it had been with honour, I had felt less kneeling by my coffin facing twenty firelocks, than standing here your debtor.

Cream. (*Aside:* I'm a great brute. His eyes are moistening, and—I'm a great brute. 'Tis plain he has no prospect of a penny: I'll be certain.) Doubtless, Mr. Lubeski, you have had good learning?

Lub. Why, sir, I was once a schoolboy.

Cream. You know arithmetic? You can calculate?

Lub. Very well. I have had your rooms sixteen weeks; now sixteen—

Cream. Burn the rooms! Live in 'em sixteen years, I won't ask you for as many pence. Mr. Lubeski, you mus'n't think because a man in fair trade loves a guinea, that his heart is all

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figures, like a ready-reckoner. You're an honest gentleman; and they tell me—though I don't approve of rebellion, I've been special constable myself—unlucky in a good cause. In one word, sir, pay me or not, as you can—I sha'n't sleep the worse in my second floor for knowing I give you and your little girl shelter in the garrets.

Lub. Mr. Creamly, I have so long had to fight against misfortune, I want strength to meet a sudden kindness. I thank you. Did I not hope to pay you, I would not by remaining in your rooms—

Cream. Live in 'em for nothing, and you put money in my pocket. True. I used to keep stock here, but, dear heart! last winter the rats half-ruined me. But I was about to say—you won't be offended?—if you knew arithmetic, liked to keep accounts, read the newspaper and books, write a letter or so,—for time must lie heavy on your hands?—

Lub. It does—it does. Well, sir?

Cream. I know a gentleman—my landlord—who asked me about such a person. I declare, here's his card.

Lub. (*Reading card.*) "Mr. Beeswing, St. James's-square."

Cream. At present he lives in the house of Lord Amberton. His lordship's daughter is to marry Mr. Beeswing's nephew, Mr. Clarendon.

Lub. And your landlord wants a clerk?

Cream. Not a clerk. Merely a gentleman who can cypher, read, and write: not a clerk. But I must leave you. A hundred pardons! How is Miss Augusta? I've scarcely seen her these two days.

Lub. She is well. Being myself frequently from home, she finds society in the family of a fellow-countryman and brother exile.

Cream. Yet a word. You know Mrs. Fossil, my housekeeper? If she should hint at your rent, just to oblige me, put a bold face on it—bluster a little, and, if need be, offer to show her my receipt in full.

Lub. Why should I act such falsehood?

Cream. To save my character; for if it were known I was an easy man 'twould ruin me. 'Tis my plan. I never forgave an account without making my debtor promise to give it out that I had almost driven him to gaol. When I was overseer, 'twas my rule not to give a shilling from my own pocket till the pauper had bound himself to abuse me everywhere as a stony-hearted fellow, that hanging was too good for. Now, if Mrs. Fossil—

Lub. I trust, sir, by speedy payment to—

Cream. Not a syllable. Look on these garrets as your free-

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hold. You've brought me luck. Since you've lived here, I've done more trade than in any season since the swallows built in the kitchen chimney. Only humour me, and say hard things of me; call me a severe man—a miserly man—an unfeeling man; but I shall take it as a great favour that you never call me an easy man. [*Exit at door.*

Lub. My landlord's odd talk has warmed me like a draught of wine. Yes, after all, it is a good world. We are poor fools, and make sad mistakes; but there is goodness, hived, like wild honey, in strange nooks and corners. Let me think. There is now no hope of any remittance. I am a beggar in a foreign land. Without a hope—without—stay, shall I see what this may offer? What! become a servant—a hired menial? See myself?—myself!—Can I see the iron fingers of want pinching a child's cheeks? Pride, stay here with the bare walls! I'll cross the threshold a new and humble man.—(*Reading card.*)—"St. James's-square—St. James's"—I recollect—yes—I think I can find the way. [*Exit at door.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the House of* LORD AMBERTON, *St. James's-square.*

LADY AUBREY *and* MARGARET *discovered, looking at laces, &c.* AUGUSTA *waiting.*

Lady Aubrey. No, Lady Margaret; this is the lace. I declare a spider's web is thicker. This lace, with—why, you're no more concerned about your wedding dress, than if it were your shroud.

Margaret. No, madam; for in truth I can't see the difference. If I'm not to live happily, I care little what I'm buried in.

Lady A. (*Aside to her:* Before this person! Consult your self-respect. See, this lace.)

Marg. Yes, very pretty—I have no judgment. What do you think?

Augusta. 'Tis very handsome, madam; yet this, to me, appears still more delicate.

Marg. So it is: it shall be this. (*Aside to* LADY AUBREY: You hav'n't noticed her; she's very beautiful.)

Lady A. Very—for a milliner.

Marg. (*Aside to* LADY AUBREY: Then, her manners—her appearance.) (*To* AUGUSTA.) Have you been long with Madame Millechoses?

Aug. No, madam.

Marg. You're not my countrywoman?

Aug. No, madam.

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Lady A. Now, Margaret, conclude your choice. I have twenty different things to despatch; letters to write, orders to give,—

Marg. Dear Madam, let me tease you no longer. This young person and myself will arrange everything.—(LADY AUBREY *sits at table writing.* MARGARET *comes down with* AUGUSTA.)—We will say this, then; and, for the rest, why suppose 'twas yourself to be married, and—

Aug. Madam!

Marg. Make the gown after your own heart. I'm sure you hope to be married? I'd lay my life you crossed the sea with wet eyes at leaving somebody.

Aug. I left my country—left my home—left—

Marg. Your sweetheart, I'll vow by your looks? There! white and red,—and your little hand's like any stone!

Aug. I fear, madam, I waste your time. I will see your orders carefully followed.

Marg. Don't go. I do so want a friend! Tell me, did you ever read Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia?

Aug. Never.

Marg. I wish you had; then you'd pity me.—Then you'd feel what it was to live all your days in a beautiful country-house, with fields and gardens, and trees, all like so many old friends; to run where you like, to sing what you please, to say what you think,—and then, at a word, to be brought to London, to be built up with silks, and bones, and brocades,—and to be made to look, move, and speak, as though you were fixed in a golden frame; till a gentleman you don't care a pin for, comes to hand you out, and make you—as they preach to me—a happy woman!

Aug. And he will—be assured, he will. In due time your heart will receive him.

Marg. I fear my heart is a very little one; and somebody's there already. Hush! my lady. Pray, come to me again. I like you; my old servants were left at the Hall. I wish you'd come and live with me; my father will not refuse me.

Aug. I have a father, lady, who would not spare me. Yet, I feel your kindness, truly feel it.

Lady A. Now, Margaret, have you at last decided?

Marg. Yes. I shall be fine—very fine.

Lady A. (*To* AUGUSTA.) To-morrow, then?

Aug. To-morrow, madam. [*Exit.*

Marg. What a face of goodness! She reminds me of the shepherdess Urania, who, plucking the thorn from the lamb's foot, looked—

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Lady A. Nay, Margaret, you must not talk Arcadian in St. James's: such prattle should cease with your girlhood. (*Rings bell—Enter* Servant.) Let this letter be taken to Mr. Effingham.

Servant. Mr. Beeswing bade me ask if your ladyship was to be seen?

Lady A. By him, certainly. [*Exit* Servant.

Marg. A letter—to Mr. Effingham?

Lady A. You and he met frequently when children?

Marg. Before he went to Oxford, we were never a day apart.

Lady A. I have heard as much.

Marg. He lived only six miles from the Hall; and many a night when his tutor thought him locked in, fast asleep, he and I were sitting happily together in the little hermitage. Poor fellow! to see me, he has often dropped from his window at the risk of breaking his dear neck. I doubt it's more than Mr. Clarendon would do.

Lady A. You know not that.

Marg. Well, this I know—I'm almost wicked enough to wish he'd try.

Lady A. For shame, Margaret! The early death of your mother, with the foreign employment of his lordship, left you too free at an age requiring the most tender vigilance. You must now forget that Mr. Effingham—

Marg. Forget! Why, he gardened for me—fished for me—borrowed books for me—painted for me—petted my pug-dog, and taught my bullfinch to whistle.

Lady A. You are now to become Mr. Clarendon's wife. You know, your father's fortune is a ruin.

Marg. I'm very sorry; but I'm not quite sure he has any right to use his child's heart to repair it.

Lady A. By this marriage, you relieve your father from anxieties, which else, quickening his illness, might make you, Margaret, an orphan.

Marg. I'm very unhappy! I love my father dearly, but—I—I won't marry.

Lady A. Margaret?

Marg. I won't; or, if I do, I'll have such revenge! I'll spend the pin-money you talk of in marmosets and parrots; my house shall be open to all the world; yet my husband feel the only stranger in it. If Mr. Clarendon dare marry me, I'll turn his whole fortune into china—I'll break his heart—and I'll—I'll call you old aunty to my dying day. [*Exit.*

Lady A. I feared this. 'Twas fit I should see Mr. Effingham—his visits here were most imprudent, till Margaret be safely married.

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Enter BEESWING.

Beeswing. Safely married, said you, my lady? Thinking of the young couple? Well, I don't like to have people sighing and languishing, when they might be happy at once.—Let the day stand as we appointed.

Lady A. If his lordship's restored health—Heavens, Mr. Beeswing! have you seen my brother?

Beesw. Just come down stairs from him.—Worse this morning.

Lady A. Worse! What are the symptoms?

Beesw. Another doctor. He makes the third: my lady, few constitutions can stand such attacks.

Lady A. Really, sir, you have an enviable stoicism for the afflictions of others.

Beesw. Afflictions! Vapours, my lady; with, perhaps, a dash of gout. Now, if my Lord Amberton, instead of a nobleman, were a—a drysalter,—

Lady A. Mr. Beeswing!

Beesw. A leather-seller, or a tallow merchant—what with the markets, his clerks, and his counting-house, he'd want time to waste in illness. But, my lady, with you high folks, whenever a sickness shows itself in a family, you treat it with so much pomp and ceremony, it can't make up its mind to leave you.—My wonder is that death itself doesn't oftener come among you.

Lady A. Mr. Beeswing!

Beesw. You do so tempt him with gilt-nails and velvet, and paint his visiting card so finely outside your houses. For my Lord Amberton,—

Lady A. Your pardon; I have not seen his lordship since last night. Intellects, whose strength I must admire, though cannot emulate, may think me weak. I avow, and retire under the enormity. [*Exit.*

Beesw. A very tolerable sneer. I wish I was at home again. A poor ox, driven through St. James's, staring at the odd sights and stunned by the strange sounds about him, doesn't miss his grass and clear water more than I—whilst wandering through this fine palace, and seeing little but my own face in fifty mirrors—long for my quiet box at Camberwell, my garden, and my greenhouse. But, as 'tis to please his lordship, I visit him till my nephew marries.—(*Enter* Servant.)—Well?

Servant. Somebody, sir, begs to see you.

Beesw. A gentleman?

Serv. No, sir; a person.—He refused to give his name.

Beesw. Show him in—stay—another genteel beggar, I warrant·

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with a set face, and a set speech. I'm fairly hunted by 'em. (*Enter* LUBESKI, *shown in by* Servant, *who goes off.*) I—I thought so. Dumb? He's taking measure of my countenance for one of his long stories; making up his mind whether his wife shall have died last week, or brought him a brace of boys yesterday morning; whether he has been ruined by a friend, or bed-ridden six weeks with a fever.

Lubeski. I trust, sir, I shall be excused the liberty—

Beesw. (*Aside:* I knew it.)

Lub. Of this self-introduction. I am induced to wait upon you—

Beesw. (*Aside:* Having heard of my great benevolence—that must come now.)

Lub. In consequence of—(*Aside:* 'Sdeath! I cannot go on; there's a something in his manner that curdles my blood.) I have, sir, to solicit—(*Aside:* He looks at me with eyes of brass; I cannot speak to him.)

Beesw. (*Aside:* I see the end of this: he'll thrust a petition with twenty forged names into my hand, pull out his handkerchief, and wait for a glimpse of my purse. I don't like the fellow's face; 'tis certain he lives by distress, he's so genteel upon it.)

Lub. I—(*Aside:* Psha! courage!)—Sir, permit me to ask, if—

Beesw. Permit me. How's your wife? You have a wife, of course?

Lub. No, sir.

Beesw. I forgot; you buried her last week.

Lub. Sir! It is ten years since I endured that loss. (*Aside:* Patience!)

Beesw. But your poor six children?—is it six or seven?

Lub. Neither, sir.

Beesw. No wife—no six children? Then you beg on your own account?

Lub. Beg! beg!

Beesw. I can't be wrong? Don't you come to me for relief?

Lub. Say, she who is in heaven was yet in this cold world, that she and children, all were famishing, if I did stoop to beg, I would as soon put up my prayer to a wall of flint, as look in that granite face, and speak it. [*Going.*

Beesw. Granite face! (*Aside:* Come, he's even with me there.) Stop! I—I—why you needn't glare at me so! I'm neither wizard nor devil.

Lub. Sir, you are a rich man; providence has gathered about you every happiness. Devil! If men do seem devils, it is when

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made drunk and callous by the bounty of heaven, they mock and mortify their fellow-men. Sir, I did not come to beg.

[LUBESKI *is about to retire.*

Beesw. Not so fast; I like you.—You are a plain-spoken man—a noble man. I ask your pardon; I tell you I ask your pardon.—I wouldn't say more to a king, I wouldn't say less to a shoe-black. The truth is, I thought I could read features; I find I'm a dunce. And I say, when you talked about granite, perhaps, you had the same conceit? I hope to prove you as great a dunce as myself. I confess, I might seem hard and sudden; for if I pity the fellow who has no compassion, I detest the scoundrel who abuses it. Charity is such a lovely creature, my blood comes up when I see a set of rascals—and there's a pretty knot in this town—trying to impose upon her. And now, sir, if you please, we'll suppose neither you nor I have spoken, and you are just come to tell me your business?

Lub. I was informed, sir, by Mr. Creamly, that you wished to engage—

Beesw. I see, sir. Again I ask your pardon. Why, yes, sir; I—but pray be seated. I did speak to Creamly about some one as a sort of clerk.

Lub. It is to solicit that office, sir, I have presumed to wait upon you.

Beesw. There is but little to do. My wealth is no longer embarked in trade. Still, there are a few rents to gather in—with some plain accounts to keep: you are used to the employment?

Lub. In my time, I have been steward many years.

Beesw. To a large estate?

Lub. A princely one.—So the owner thought it.

Beesw. And who was he?

Lub. He was not of England.

Beesw. And how lost you your stewardship?

Lub. The owner lost his lands—his all.

Beesw. Gambling, I suppose? I never by chance hear the rattling of dice, that it doesn't sound to me like the funeral bell of a whole family. I see; your master played a losing cast—he was a gamester?

Lub. The game was terrible he ventured—the loss beyond all remedy. The hearts of his family—his household—his own heart—were staked upon the throw.

Beesw. Madman and fool!

Lub. No, sir; for when men play the game he played, even angels suffer with them when they lose.

Beesw. What is this? What game is it you mean?

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Lub. The game of free man against a tyrant: the game which makes man in all places and in all griefs worthy of his mind and image,—or at his own hearthstone, renders him a felon and an outcast.

Beesw. Go on,—I am ashamed—I,—pray, go on. He lost all, you say?

Lub. All. His fields were ploughed by desolation—slaughter and fire were in his home; as you say, he lost the cast.

Beesw. God bless him! The time may return, when—

Lub. *Must* return. The spoiler has his winnings,—ashes and bleeding carcases. Yet there are bones, though now but paste, shall be as steel to play the game again.—Pray, excuse me, sir; you have touched on recollections that, I fear, take me from myself—I ask your pardon. As I said, I have served the office of steward.

Beesw. (*Aside:* He's a fine fellow—a very fine fellow.) I don't so much want a steward as a kind of companion—for I'm about to lose my nephew—to read and write,—you know what I mean?

Lub. I hope, sir, on trial you may find me worthy of your service.

Beesw. No doubt: I am glad you are the first to offer. Know you any one in England, who—

Lub. I lodge at the house of Mr. Creamly.

Beesw. I mean, is there anybody you could refer me to—'tis only a form—for your character?

Lub. Sir! (*Aside:* I should have expected this.)

Beesw. You are aware, 'tis usual to ask the question?

Lub. It is usual, sir.

Beesw. 'Tis unlucky. Have you no papers—no certificate of integrity from your last place?

Lub. None.

Beesw. None?—no testimony?

Lub. Now I think again, I have that which may pass for one.

Beesw. Where is it?

Lub. There—(*Taking an Order from his bosom.*)

Beesw. Why, what is this?

Lub. The order of the White Eagle.

Beesw. How!—yours?

Lub. My father's—presented to him on the field of battle, by John Sobieski, king of Poland. It is one of the proofs—and one I did not think to show—of family fidelity to our masters.

Beesw. What a wise old fool am I! Now I comprehend; you were your own steward;—'twas yourself, who—give me your hand; you are welcome—heartily welcome. You shall go

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home with me—for you mus'n't think this my house; no, nothing so fine; no gilding—no painting, all plain oak and walnut at Camberwell. I have done you wrong, sir,—I must have seemed a coarse-grained, carkish old hunks; depend on't, if somewhat rough outside, I'm not all husk.

Lub. I hope, sir, by my future service—

Beesw. Service! be from this hour my companion—my friend. After the wedding, we'll go home, and you shall tell me all your wrongs, and I'll—I'll swear an accompaniment. Why, we'll get over the time bravely! we'll dig a little, and fish a little, and read a little, and sing a little; and, to sum it up, we'll be two jolly, young old boys. Not a word; I say, we will. Now, I know I'm not deceived: you are a fine fellow. And, as you have been used scurvily for some time, you shall henceforth live in lamb's-wool; ay, and you shall go to your grave down easy steps, comfortably carpeted. Only let Ned—eh, here he is.—

Enter CLARENDON.

My nephew, sir, Ned Clarendon. Ned, this is—(*Aside:*—I wonder what's his name!)—my friend. A lucky dog, sir; going to marry a beautiful creature; an angel,—isn't she, Ned?

Clar. Sir, my humility will not suffer me to deny the inequality of the match.

Beesw. No spoilt town miss, but country flesh and blood; fresh and healthy as her own hawthorns. But, come, sir, we won't keep him from his devotions.—(*Aside:* I'll send immediately for Creamly;—yes, hear what he says, and take his lodger off his hands.) This way, sir; the youngster wants to get rid of us—he's devoured with impatience till we are gone. Oh, Ned! Ned! thou art a fortunate rascal.—(*To* LUBESKI.) Sir, again and again you are welcome.

[*Exeunt* BEESWING, *and* LUBESKI.

Clar. Why, the girl is pretty enough. Yes; 'twill please my uncle—I'll marry her; make her a fond husband; become an affectionate father; and, indeed, be a most exemplary illustration of all the tombstone virtues. And yet, why did I travel? Had I so much reason, I must go lose the best part of it abroad? Were there not lovely women at home, that I should cross the ocean to pine for a shade,—a mystery? Nay, that's it. Who could she be—whither could she go? Had she remained I might in due season have lost the goddess in the woman. No! impossible.

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Enter EFFINGHAM, *followed by* Servant, *who goes off on the opposite side.*

Effingham! Why, I never saw you so damped—so clouded! In fact, with such a marrying look. What is it?

Effingham. (*Aside:* No; he has not the lynx-eyes of her ladyship; he cannot suspect.) Nothing: indeed, nothing. Marrying! Ha! Clarendon, you'll be a happy man.

Clar. Effingham, why did you eschew the church? You'd have shone as ordinary; you prophesy future bliss with such a Tyburn air of consolation.

Eff. But with Margaret—with her disposition—her face!—

Clar. I have travelled—have seen faces.

Eff. You're an infidel to name them against looks at home. Is not the beauty of Englishwomen?—

Clar. Most beautiful; nay, 'twould be divine, if they didn't think their beauty like champagne—better for being iced. With beauty, I'm a cosmopolite: now, you are a prejudiced Greenlander, passionately devoted to your own snow. I allow—Margaret is handsome.

Eff. And so formed by education,—her mind, trained in the country,—

Clar. Country? Nay, you might say in a kitchen garden.

Eff. Clarendon!

Clar. All her sentiments—at least, to me—so smell of thyme and sweet marjoram. How comes it, Effingham, that you yourself did not select Margaret? You, who were children together—who made love, I may say, biting the same apple.

Eff. We have certainly been acquainted from an early age, but—

Clar. Then how is it, since your intimacy commenced in the nursery, it didn't tend to the same point?

Eff. Had it been my wish, my limited fortune had silenced it.

Clar. When I was a schoolboy I didn't blind myself to an orchard, simply because I hadn't wherewithal to buy the fruit. Nor are you the man to weigh your heart against a money bag—to count impulses with guineas. The truth is, you didn't like the girl; no, 'twas reserved for me to be the victim.

Eff. Victim! If you seriously think so, for her sake break off the match.

Clar. For her sake I must be sacrificed. The poor girl would go distracted. You can't conceive the intensity of her affection.

Eff. Intensity! At least then she is an exception to the ice you spoke of?

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Clar. No, indeed; she was at first cold and chilly enough; but, hang it! even in England, it doesn't freeze all the year round. And, after all, I must allow, she has sensibility and beauty,—and, besides, a passion for me which is certain of at least my gratitude.

Eff. (*Aside:* Can this be his illusion, or can it be really so?)

Clar. Thus, I persuade myself I shall at length subside into the decencies of matrimony, and become a respectable husband. That is, though I may feel my chains, take especial care the world shall not hear them clank. 'Tis a prudence that often passes for happiness, and may serve with me.

Re-enter Servant.

Serv. (*To* EFFINGHAM) Sir, Lady Aubrey awaits you.

Eff. I attend. (*Aside:* Now, for her ladyship's commands; if they be as I surmise, and Margaret be not really fickle, I have a plan that shall defeat fortune at her worst.) [*Exit.*

Serv. (*To* CLARENDON) Shall I tell my lady Margaret, sir, you are here?

Clar. Eh?—yes. (*Exit* Servant.) My Cupid must be of the dullest to need such a remembrancer. (*Musing.*) When my uncle first pressed the match, I carelessly assented. I thought 'twould be at most a matter of indifference; but, as the time draws near, my heart begins to stir a little—to feel certain quiverings,—stay, do not these thoughts come too late?

Enter VALISE.

Valise. Sir—sir—sir!

Clar. What wonder, now?

Val. I—I haven't breath to tell it.

Clar. Go, take breath,—I can wait.

Val. Two words, sir.—Dresden—the lady.

Clar. What! Dresden! Speak—what of her! Speak, I say—speak! Though you are strangling, speak!

Val. She's here.

Clar. Here?

Val. These eyes have seen her.

Clar. When—where?

Val. Not five minutes since, at the house of Mr. Creamly. I'll tell you all, sir.

Clar. Stay: now—go on.

Val. Your uncle, sir, sent me just now to tell Mr. Creamly to wait upon him. I ran to his house, when, who should I see

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at the window, but the very young lady about whom you nearly killed your humble servant.

Clar. I will yet kill you, you scoundrel!

Val. Sir!

Clar. What lie—what imposition have you fabricated? It wanted but this to drive me mad. Seen her!—it cannot be—it is impossible.

Val. I won't dispute that, sir; but as I'm a Christian footman, it really is. I saw her at one of the windows—(*Aside:* I darn't tell him the garret.) I don't wonder, sir, you are surprised; for myself, if a thunderbolt had knocked me down, it couldn't have more astonished me.

Clar. You persist in the story? You—my good Valise, are you certain?

Val. Oh, sir, I watched her about too long at Dresden to forget her: and then, sir, your passion, when at last I missed her, was so red-hot, it burnt every feature she had into my memory. Besides, I have inquired,—

Clar. Yes.

Val. Inquired of Creamly's man—a foolish, friendly fellow—and he tells me she is a foreigner not long in England; that—why, sir, what's the matter?

Clar. (*Aside:* I am sick—death-sick. Fever and ague seem at once upon me. Now I feel as if I could dance, sing, weep! She is here. Here! What an age of hope, dread, bliss, misery, is in the word! Countries between us, the place unknown, it seemed a beautiful vision—a sweet and mournful dream; but,—here!)

Val. Sir, I didn't think the news would change you so.

Clar. It has changed me. (*Aside:* It has made me know myself—and in good time. What I thought indifference would have curdled to disgust—what I schooled myself to think visionary, would have become an actual presence. My good genius has preserved me.) (*To* VALISE.) You can show me the house? And yet, ought I—dare I see her?

Enter Servant.

Serv. The lady Margaret, sir, attends you.

Clar. I'm coming—say,—say I'm coming.

[CLARENDON *goes off hurriedly on the opposite side:* VALISE *and* Servant *exchange looks, and exeunt severally.*

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SCENE III.—*The Lodgings of* LUBESKI.

AUGUSTA *seated at work.*

Augusta. I think I shall finish this part of my task before my father comes. Twenty times I have been about to tell him all: then, the thought of his proud nature, his love for me, has kept me dumb. No; did he know that for the last fortnight he had owed his sustenance to the labour of his child, 'twould break his heart. He has believed me with his friends; and they have promised to keep my secret; at least, so long as it can be kept. (*Rising, takes a wedding-dress from box beside her.*) 'Twas kind of Madame to suffer me to bring home the dress. I can go on until near the time of my father's coming; and then, when he has gone to bed, have the whole night to finish it. This is a wedding-dress; poor girl! she seems kind, ingenuous, affectionate. I would I were working for a happier bride! Poor girl!

[*A knock, when* JUNKET *suddenly enters.*

Aug. (*Standing before the chair, to hide the dress.*) Who's there?

Junket. Don't start, miss; I have some news to tell you. Don't be alarmed; we are all safe. Mr. Creamly is sent for by Mr. Beeswing, and I've turned the key upon mother-in-law. You see, I'm not a fool. I know knavery from fair-play. Now, when a gentleman asks me a delicate question, I satisfy myself that he is a gentleman before I answer, I warrant me; else I had never let the gentleman who is now in the house cross the door to see you.

Aug. See me! A gentleman?

Junk. 'Twas with tears in his eyes he prevailed upon me.

Aug. And you have brought him—*here?*

Junk. I didn't expose you. I told him you were still very rich, only you had a particular fancy for these apartments.

Aug. I beseech you, my good man, spare me the interview. If he be a friend, my father—

Junk. He won't hear a word about your father; 'tis you, and you only. (*Aside:* Poor souls! he may bring a bag of gold for 'em.) I'll show him in.

Aug. Do not—pray, do not. I am alone, and—

Junk. Not alone, for I'm at hand; and, trust me, miss, I know too well the prize in my keeping to let any housebreaker come in and steal it. [*Exit at door.*

Aug. Good friend,—gone! I'll make fast the door, and—

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Enter CLARENDON.

Clar. Madam! Augusta!

Aug. (*Aside: He!* Oh, pride! fortune has no further malice.)

Clar. Bar the door—shut out one, who for two years past has thirsted for this blessed moment? The pilgrim with bleeding lips at length stoops to the fountain; it were a cruel spirit that should bid the waters sink into the sand. I pray you, do not deny me. You have not forgotten me?

Aug. No, sir; I will not feign it. I have not forgotten you. We met at Dresden.

Clar. I knew not then your worth. I was as a poor man's child, who in his play-hours finds a priceless diamond; who, careless, loses it, and only learns from after-knowledge that the loss has beggared him. You have not forgotten me?

Aug. No, sir; yet remember nothing which may give a meaning to your present language.

Clar. Nothing! True, no words were uttered; but, surely, love is not a spirit to be raised only by words.

Aug. Love!

Clar. Love, as strong, as deep, as ever lodged within the breast of man. On your sudden departure from the city—

Aug. I was called away. I told you Dresden was not my native place.

Clar. 'Twas all I could discover. I knew not where you had fled, but knew my heart was with you.

Aug. I pray, sir, leave me.

Clar. Since then you have been my day-dream. Worn, wearied with its hopelessness, I was become a reckless, apathetic being, when the news of your discovery gave me a new existence.

Aug. I entreat, sir, leave me. If at any time I might have listened, that time is past. If you wish my peace—if you value my esteem—if you respect my honour—leave me.

Clar. What have I to learn? Your voice—your looks conjure up thoughts, which if true,—Augusta, what has happened?

Aug. Events—fatal events. Pray, sir, spare me further explanation: let it suffice, we do not meet as before we met.

Clar. Not as before? You are lost to me—you are another's? The blood rushing to your cheek blinds me with the truth Augusta, you are—a wife?

Aug. No.

Clar. No! And yet changed—yet,—(*Seeing dress on the chair.*) —What is that? I am in a cloud of mystery and dread; all else so plain, and yet that dress? Is it not the garment of a bride?

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Aug. It is a wedding-gown.

Clar. And yours?

Aug. No,—a friend's. (*Aside:* I may call her so. No, I cannot love; for surely true love must kill such foolish pride.)

Clar. I have drunk new life from your lips. Still a word. Say, your heart is still the same as when—

Aug. I came to Dresden?

Clar. No—as when you quitted it?

Aug. It is.

Clar. Then it is mine, and here again I challenge it! Here I hang the jewel at *my* heart, praying that neither time nor sorrow may dim its beauty; that what is the glory of my prime may be the gladness of my old age; and that having proudly worn it through a life, I may sleep with it near me in the grave.

Aug. Edward!

Clar. Augusta, beloved Augusta! This joy is so sudden, so exquisite, it has unmanned me. (*Half-aside:* What a deliverance! What misery have I been spared!)

Aug. Deliverance! Edward!

Clar. (*Aside:* She must know all; yet—)

Aug. Edward, I have shown you my naked heart. What misery?

Clar. Believing you for ever lost, and with you that deep happiness which you alone could give me, I was become careless of all beside. True, I laughed, jested, disguising by a hollow levity the disappointment that devoured me. I—I have an uncle; a kind, good man, the only friend I ever knew. My first hope blighted, I could refuse him nothing.

Aug. You should not.

Clar. He has a friend; one, who though far above him in worldly rank, has yet been greatly aided by his means. 'Twas my uncle's wish to cancel all such debts by a union with the family. He proposed to me the daughter of that friend; I have promised to wed her—but, dearest Augusta, let love teach you charity,—I thought you for ever dead to me.

Aug. Think so still, sir, and perform your promise.

Clar. Not if she brought the dowry of the world. You are restored to me,—restored—

Aug. Do not think it. I tell you, sir, if the grass were growing over me, it were not less to be hoped.

Clar. You do not pardon me—do not forgive an error proceeding from my very despair?

Aug. I do, from my soul, forgive it. May you be happy!

Clar. Hear me!

Aug. Do not hope to stir me. Did you offer me the wealth

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and state of a whole empire, I would not take you for my husband guilty of a woman's broken heart.

Clar. Speak not with such terrible composure. Or have the two past years taught her I thought the soul of tenderness a cold tranquillity, that whilst it dooms the victim, is itself unmoved?

Aug. It may be, sir; for in that time I have studied at a school where death and outrage were daily teachers. I have had stern lessons, sir.

Clar. Forgive me. Augusta,—condemn, reproach me—but speak not, look not, so calmly!

Aug. Did I wish to use reproach, I might ask if it was a noble, a prudent course, to break in here upon my quiet—to subdue me with a flood of recollections—and, in that sacred moment when woman shows her heart to man, and showing, gives it,—was it kind to tell me you could not wear the gift?—I might ask, was it kind to seek me, only to tell me this?

Clar. Do not think it! A blessed Providence has re-united us—we never part again! I will explain all to my uncle, to Lord Amberton—lay bare my soul before the Lady Margaret—

Aug. Margaret! Margaret!

Clar. Gain her free assent, and return, Augusta—return to ask you of a father. [*Rushes out at door.*

Aug. Amberton! The lady Margaret! And this her wedding-dress! and I—I must employ the whole night to complete it. (*Takes the dress, making an effort to repress her feelings; the garment falls from her hand.*) Was fortune ever yet so wayward! [*Sinks in the chair.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in the House of* LORD AMBERTON.

Enter BEESWING *and* CLARENDON.

Beeswing. Sir, I've heard enough; you're a coxcomb; a poor, vain fellow, who would play at cup-and-ball with the hearts of the whole sex.

Clarendon. Sir, you promised to judge me charitably.

Beesw. So I have: and that's my verdict,—you're a coxcomb. Plain justice might call you a scoundrel.

Clar. Sir!

Beesw. Phoo! I've no respect for injured looks, when they'd justify mean actions. What! sport with the affections of a

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confiding girl!—stand, in the face of the world, her pledged husband, and then, with no other warrant but your own fickleness, to blow her from you like a feather!

Clar. You wrong me, sir. I have told you, that an affection for one I had considered lost,—

Beesw. Yes, at Dresden. In the course of your travels did you visit Kamschatka, or touch on the Gold Coast? I have good reason for the questions; for as you seem to have carried about so much affection in small change, there's no knowing in what place you mayn't have been liberal. Why, release you from your present engagement, and in a month hence you'd beg my favour for a lady in black fox-skins, or a princess with her royalty tattoed in her countenance.

Clar. And I had as lief marry either, or both, as the lady your goodness has provided me. Sir, you never loved—your heart,—

Beesw. How do you know? How dare you talk of my heart? Perhaps it's a snow-ball—perhaps, a cinder. Or is it, sir, because I've brought *you* up in it, that you presume to question its material?

Clar. Dear uncle, I would encounter any grief rather than your displeasure. I feel—I am proud to feel—I owe you every thing.

Beesw. Keep your word—marry Margaret—and you have your receipt in full.

Clar. Sir, it is impossible.

Beesw. Sir, I've lived three-and-sixty years, and in an honourable cause I don't know the meaning of the word. This I know; I'm under a contract to Lord Amberton; you are pledged to his daughter; and if you dare desert the girl, I'll—yes, for the credit of the family—I'll marry the wench myself.

Clar. And why not, sir!—As you say, you are but three-and-sixty; your constitution is sound—

Beesw. As oak.

Clar. Your habits, healthful and temperate—

Beesw. As a Brahmin's.

Clar. You may yet have an heir, who—

Beesw. An heir?

Clar. Nay, a crowd of little cherubs—a whole grove of olive branches.

Beesw. To be sure; and see them all brought up; and, having lived to a green old age, see my darling cherubs become one by one perverse, flap-eared puppies—have all my promising olive branches turn to bundles of thistles. No, sir, you shall not dance at my wedding, whatever you may do at my funeral.

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(*Enter* LUBESKI.)

Ha, my friend! Thank the stars you have no fortune to cast away on disobedience. Look at this fine gentleman. I had picked him a wife from a thousand—he had accepted my choice, and now he comes with a blank, romance-reading face, to tell me he had made a previous bargain. You've been a soldier—used to discipline: if he were your own flesh and blood, wouldn't you shoot him?

Lub. Not without a trial.

Clar. 'Tis all I ask.

Beesw. You've had it, and been found guilty. But, since you question the verdict, move for a new hearing; my friend, here, shall be one of the judges; ay, and to give you every chance, your counsel to boot.

Clar. I accept him in both offices. (*Aside:* If I can bring the old gentleman back to good humour, my cause is not so desperate.) [BEESWING *and* LUBESKI *sit.*

Beesw. (*Rising.*) I'll open the proceedings. My lord, this rascal at the bar—

Lub. You mean—the unhappy man?

Beesw. No, the fortunate dog—for he's my nephew—four years ago, with a light head and a heavy pocket, quitted England. Whilst abroad he ate a certain quantity of maccaroni—pelted the women with sugar at the carnival—took a month's lessons on the guitar—fought two duels with a brace of German students, and broke the head of one French postillion: so much for his foreign acquirements. He returned to his foolish uncle, with his pocket weighing just as much as his head—leaving, as he now says, his heart behind him,—and bringing in its stead, sixpennyworth of the coin of the Cæsars—a necklace curiously cut from the lava of Vesuvius—and a Venus, wanting a nose, from the ruins of Herculaneum.

Clar. So far I plead guilty. Yet, could I produce one, whose beauty—

Lub. It can't be received. Beauty can give no evidence, beauty itself being, time out of mind, an outlaw.

Beesw. A Robin Hood in petticoats. Capital!—(*Aside to* LUBESKI: Who taught you that point of practice?)

Lub. (*Aside to* BEESWING: A gardener's daughter, when I was eighteen.)

Clar. If not her beauty, may not her virtue speak for me?

Beesw. No; because it can't. For virtue, attempting to gloss dishonesty, if it doesn't grow ashamed, and break down in the oration, ceases to be virtue.

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Clar. Sir, I have recently sworn a faith,—

Lub. The oath's irregular.

Beesw. (*Aside to* LUBESKI: I don't know; I'm afraid he has kissed the book.)

Clar. A faith which, to break, would break my heart. I find I cannot longer argue in sport a cause so bound up with my being. In a word, uncle, it is in your power to make me a beggar, but you cannot force me to a marriage, which must henceforth doom me a wretch. [*Exit.*

Beesw. Make him a beggar! He sha'n't have enough to stock his two pauper hands with matches. Here have I chosen a beautiful creature, the daughter of—by the way, where's your Augusta? you promised to bring her. She knows you are here?

Lub. Not yet. She had retired to bed before I reached home, and early this morning, as I found on rising, she was gone to pass the day with friends, my own country-people.

Beesw. I must see her.

Lub. You shall see her. But your nephew, sir, has he informed you who was his first election?

Beesw. Some unknown foreign wench—I ask your pardon; I mean, some pretty exotic. But if she were as rich as Queen Sheba, he shouldn't have her.

Lub. Poor young gentleman!

Beesw. Why, you are not on his side?

Lub. Yet you made me his counsel.

Beesw. True; go on, my mind's made up, so I don't fear to listen. Isn't my nephew a disobedient rascal?

Lub. No; since his affections were not in his own keeping, is he accountable for their loss?

Beesw. Yes,—he had no business to travel with them. Then talks of the tyranny of love! Love! Cupid, sir, should be a patriot.

Lub. It's impossible; for he never had a fixed country.

Beesw. Then you'd have me consent to this vagabond match?

Lub. If the girl be found worthy,—yes.

Beesw. Shall I break my word?

Lub. Will you break your nephew's heart?

Beesw. A vulgar notion,—I grant, his neck or his leg may be broken; but, poets lie, the heart has no joint. There never was a broken heart.

Lub. Granting this, the lady Margaret would suffer little by her loss.

Beesw. I speak of young, riotous men; a woman's heart is a different thing. Like a singing bird in a cage, if neglected, it

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starves and dies; but, for our hearts, why they're free birds of prey, vultures and hawks, or thievish magpies at the best. Tut! once joined, they'll be happy enough. Shouldn't I know at my years something of marriage, though I never ventured on its sea?

Lub. Yes; just as much as a man knows of the sea itself, who has only walked along the shore. He knows not how rashness or indifference may go down in sound timbers, nor can he conceive how watchfulness and harmony may keep alive the veriest wreck. If my daughter were destined for the voyage of matrimony, I wouldn't trust her to expedience, no, not if shipped in gilded oak: I'd give her to the good captain, affection; for he—and I have tried him—has the seamanship of a witch, and will keep above water, ay, though trusted to a sieve.

Beesw. Affection! And why, in good time, mayn't affection grow from indifference?

Lub. Because it is a dead stock. You may as well plant your walking-stick in your garden, and look to see it bud, as hope to gather from indifference the fruit that makes marriage palatable.

Beesw. (*Aside:* I must listen no longer.) I tell you, it can't be. The girl expects Ned for her husband: he has promised to marry her—he should have known his mind—of his free will promised, and he shall have her. And that I mayn't be made a party to injustice, I've arranged it all with his lordship—they are to be matched to day. I'll come back to you in the study—I have yet a word to say to my lady, and—no! if anybody must be unhappy, it shan't be the poor girl: he is in the wrong; besides, he is the stronger of the two, and if there must be misery, 'tis right he should bear the whole of it. Don't speak. Let the marriage be once over, and we'll discuss it afterwards. [*Exit.*

Lub. This change in my fortunes is so sudden, that for a time at least, Augusta shall not know it. For should it not last—yet why fear it?—why doubt him, whose heart seems in every word he speaks?—who, in a few hours, has made me feel as an old friend? Dear Augusta! But I must arrange the few papers in my charge. I must hope for heavier duties, if I would have a lighter feeling of dependence. [*Exit.*

Enter MARGARET, *cautiously, in hat and cloak, as from the street. She takes them off, puts them in room in scene, comes forward, and sinks in a chair.*

Marg. I am safe—and yet I tremble so: and every thing

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about the house looks so altered, and,—I ought to be happy, and yet I wish I could cry. Did I ever think I should have the resolution to steal a marriage? But it's all over. I have been a wife these full twenty minutes. Dear Effingham! Now, they can't part us. Lud! here comes her ladyship. (*Sings.*)

"You may esteem him
"A child for his might—
"Or you may deem him
"A coward for his flight"——

(*Enter* LADY AUBREY.)

Good morning to your ladyship. (*Sings.*)

"But if she whom love doth honour,
"Be concealed from the day,
"Set a thousand guards upon her
"Love will find out the way."

Isn't that the prettiest of ballads?

Lady A. And it has a pretty sound, sung by a damsel on her wedding day.

Marg. Wedding-day!

Lady A. Mr. Clarendon, by his uncle, has pressed for and obtained your father's consent.—The saloon is almost prepared, the chaplain is summoned, and you have now left you but an hour of freedom.

Marg. Madam! I might as well be married in a prison. So sudden and so private!—a milkmaid would have more ceremony at her wedding.

Lady A. You know the state of your father's health admits not of the preparation which, else, might have been desired. Come, child, never fret at such an accident. You go to take a husband, and not to see a show. The happiest marriages are generally those at which simplicity and not pomp presided.

Marg. Do you think so? No doubt. Now, you and my uncle were very happy?

Lady A. We were, indeed. There are few such illustrations of conjugal love.

Marg. And yet, you made no display: for you were married at eight in the morning at a little white-washed church in a village in Cheshire; and, instead of having a crowd of fine friends about you, the pew-opener of fourscore was your bridesmaid, and the gravedigger was called from his work to give you away.

Lady A. What foolish tale is this?

Marg. Oh, no! Old Susan declared 'twas all a truth. And,

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whereas a bride usually leaves the house by the door, you, shrinking from ceremony, jumped out at the window. And then, for your wedding-dress—

Lady A. Well remembered; I have kept your milliner waiting. I will send her, and soon return myself. (*Aside:*—This comes, where there are young people, of keeping old servants.) [*Exit.*

Marg. Married! In an hour! No doubt, they have arranged the business very amicably. I am to be led out or not, as it shall please Mr. Clarendon to choose or leave me. But I'll repay him for the slight of yesterday. To ask to see a lady, and then to quit the house! Stay, had he remained, Effingham might not have seen me, might not have won me to prepare for the worst, by marrying him this morning. I have but an hour before all is known: it shall be an hour of rare sport. I am not the child they think me—I am a woman now, as they shall find.

(*Enter* AUGUSTA, *carrying a box.*)

Ha! good day. So, you have brought my gown? 'Tis very fine, I hope?

Aug. It is, madam, as you wished it. (*Aside:* An impulse—a feeling I could not control has brought me here. I felt I could not rest until again I learned if indeed she loved him.)

Marg. It is very handsome. I did not think I should be half so well pleased with it. After all, there's something about a wedding gown, prettier than in any other gown in the world.

Aug. You feel happy?

Marg. Oh yes; I feel I shall be a very, very happy wife.

Aug. And yet, yesterday you expressed a fear that—

Marg. I own it—but that fear is all over. I confess, when I first saw this satin at Madame Millchoses, my heart quaked to hear it rustle. But now, you see, I can look at my wedding dress, and smile at it.

Aug. It is a fortunate change. Then your husband,—

Marg. My husband! Dear fellow! he'll be the best of creatures!

Aug. You think you shall love him?

Marg. Think I shall love him! I—only I don't know if 'tis right to let him know it, but, between us women,—I doat on him.

Aug. So suddenly?

Marg. The truth is, I loved him all along; only I was shy, and wouldn't own it. (*Aside:* My tongue burns to tell her the whole story; but, no; now I must only trust my husband.)

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Aug. May your affection meet with a return!

Marg. I have no fear of that. Oh, you should hear him, you should see his eyes, when he vows he loves me!

Aug. (*Aside:* Can it be so? Can such hypocrisy?—Poor girl! It is her own devotion that deceives her.) [*Going.*

Marg. You are not going? Stay: you are not well?

Aug. I sat up late last night—'tis nothing more—I am very well. Again, I wish you all happiness. May your innocent nature never endure a moment's sorrow! May you both be happy! God bless you, lady!

Marg. (*Detaining her.*) Now, you shall not leave me. Sit, pray, sit. I'm sure something is at your heart? Your words, your manners, though I have seen nothing of the world, convince me you have known a better fortune. I am young, and they say, very thoughtless; but you may trust me as a sister. What has happened? I am sure you love somebody; and I am half persuaded that this dress has made you think, perhaps more than you ought, of him you love. Is it not so? No! Why, this accuses you.

Aug. Accuses!

Marg. Look; you have been weeping as you worked.—Stained my wedding gown with tears! What an omen for a bride!

Aug. (*Aside:* I was wrong to venture here. Alas! all my strength, my self-control is gone.)

Marg. When all is settled—and you will be so surprised—will you come and live with us? You shall be my friend, no less.

Aug. Impossible: nay, it is impossible.

Marg. Yet, do not leave me.—(*Aside:* How I should like to tell her the secret!) They say I'm to be married in an hour.

Aug. So soon? (*Aside:* It is better that it should be so.)

Marg. Married in an hour. Why, here comes my husband.

Aug. Let me begone—I beseech you let me go!

Marg. No, no. I mean—la! it's very foolish to mistake every body for one's husband on one's wedding-day. It's only Mr. Effingham, a family friend. Why, how you tremble! and you look as white,—go into my room.—Nay, you must not leave me; I shall want you to help me to dress. There—only a minute; I'll be with you directly. (*Puts her into room in scene.*)

Enter EFFINGHAM.

Charles! What can bring you here?

Eff. The determination to assert my right, and protect you.

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I had scarcely reached my lodgings from the church—that church, Margaret, where we became for ever one—when my servant learnt from some of your father's household, that you were this day to be forced to a marriage with Mr. Clarendon. Where then should I be, if not where I may guard my wife from violence or insult?

Marg. Dear Charles, pray be calm—All may yet end well; but, for my sake, don't look so terrible. Hark! isn't that Mr. Clarendon's voice?

Eff. I hope so.

Marg. He is coming here!

Eff. I am glad of it. 'Tis full time that all should be explained. And though I have no fear that his heart may suffer,—

Marg. Indeed, sir!

Eff. His pride may, possibly, demand some answer.—He shall find me ready.

Marg. What! you cruel, wicked creature, is this all your love, to marry me to make me a young widow? You shall not see him! I insist on your hiding yourself.

Eff. Margaret!

Marg. I beg you will. You'll not refuse your wife her first request? Go, and wait in—in my room.

Eff. 'Tis idle. Why defer what must be known?

Marg. But not yet. Come, there's a dear—pray, come. You'll find nothing except my milliner—a charming, good girl.

Eff. Be it as you will. [*Going.*

Marg. Charles, you needn't quite shut the door. I mean, that is, of course, you'll like to hear what the man has to say to your wife? (EFFINGHAM *goes into room.*) He wouldn't hide himself at first. And she, too, shook and turned pale, when—Charles!

Enter CLARENDON.

Mr. Clarendon!

Clar. Madam, I come to petition your clemency. I have wronged you.

Marg. I know your crime—it is forgiven.

Clar. Forgiven! My uncle, then, has explained all. Charming, generous girl, let me bow and bless you for this mercy. You forgive me?

Marg. I forgive you. (*Aside:* I'll make my husband listen, however.) I am sure you had no studied intention to offend me?

Clar. As I live.

Marg. I'm sure you hadn't. But events may so fall out to

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give the appearance of design to accidents wholly independent of ourselves.

Clar. (*Aside:* How have I mistaken this girl! Her sense is excellent.)

Marg. And when assured of this, to punish is not justice, but hard tyranny.

Clar. Admirable Margaret! You cannot think how this forbearance adorns you. Never in my eyes did you look so beautiful!

Marg. (*Aside:* Poor fellow! when he knows I'm married, I fear 'twill kill him.) Forbearance is a great virtue: let us both study always to possess it.

Clar. Henceforth, it shall be the aim of my life.

Marg. I hope you will judge mercifully of my conduct?

Clar. After such proofs of its disinterestedness, I will champion it against the world.

Marg. This it is to act with candour—to at once avow an error, trusting for pardon to the sympathy of—of friendship.

Clar. Excellent. Then you believe, Margaret, that though love cannot dwell in a heart, friendship may?

Marg. To be sure. Friendship, you know, takes less room—it has no wings.

Clar. And therefore may be more constant. Well, Margaret, such friendship may, *must* be ours.

Marg. What! Are we to be only friends when we're married?

Clar. Married!

Marg. Then our friendship, if her ladyship speaks the truth, may begin in an hour.

Clar. Can you have mistaken the purpose of my visit?

Marg. Certainly not. I confess, I complained to your uncle, who ventured some excuse for you. I then promised my forgiveness, and, of course, you came a penitent criminal to receive it.

Clar. And my fault?—

Marg. Fault! Treason, sir, against love and good manners. To ask to wait upon a lady, and when the favour is granted, to leave the house—to run from her as though she was a ghost! Fault!

Clar. I own, a gross one. Yet am I guilty of another crime, that—

Marg. Another! What a naughty man you must be!

Clar. In truth, when you shall know it, I must rather hope for than expect your mercy.

Marg. Dear heart! Why you look as serious as Mr. Vyse in

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the spelling-book. A crime! You haven't killed my monkey? My parrot's safe? And my beautiful china vase from Dresden, —that's it—I see it by your colour—you have broken it to atoms?

Clar. (*Aside:* A silly, insensible creature!) Madam, your monkey is, I trust, in vigorous health; your parrot, for all I have heard, yet secure: and, for the vase from Dresden, I have some old associations about the place, which would just now invest the meanest thing from that city with a new interest, even though unowned by the Lady Margaret.

Marg. Why, then, I can pardon anything. Now, culprit, what is your offence?

Clar. Madam—(*Aside:* Why hesitate with such frivolity?)—Madam, I can never marry you.

Marg. Sir!

Clar. Distressing as the avowal is, it is necessary to prevent the misery of an union, which to one of us at least, would prove a bondage.

Marg. You will not marry me—you vow you will not?

Clar. I cannot.

Marg. (*Aside:* Oh, joy!) Very well, sir; you thought I should cry at this?—doubtless had the vanity to believe I should faint. Now, sir, look at my eyes; and, for fainting, in all my life I never had such a disposition to dance. Alack-a-day! you doom me to the willow? You shall see I wear it as if it were a May garland!

Clar. I am rejoiced at this—delighted to perceive I am so indifferent to you.

Marg. (*Aside:* As yet he must not think so.) Indifferent! if there be another word, sir, to express the composure, the tranquillity of this moment—I beg, sir, you will—will—(*Affecting to weep.*)—I'll go and tell my father!

Clar. Margaret!—

Marg. I'll tell your uncle—I'll tell the whole world. To be played with, laughed at, slighted! I wish I was a man!

Clar. (*Aside:* I wish you were!) Margaret, ere I saw you, I had lost my heart.

Marg. Sir, 'twas the more hollow in you to address a lady without it.

Clar. I come to avow my guilt, and beg of your generous nature compassion and forgiveness. Nay, Margaret, it is impossible that you can love me so very, very devotedly?

Marg. You don't know your own merits. I thought I didn't —but—but you're a wicked man. Here I believed I was to be married in an hour—and here is my milliner—and here she has

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brought my wedding-gown, made so beautifully in the fashion; and pray, sir, what is to become of it?

Clar. Marry somebody else before the fashion changes. Lady Margaret, you have heard my resolution; it is unalterable. I will not lengthen a scene which, painful to you, is indeed humiliating to myself. I wish you all happiness; but, that you may be happy, we must not wed. (*Aside:* Thank heaven! that task is over. But a last trial with my uncle, and my destiny, for good or evil, is determined.) [*Exit.*

Marg. Now has Cupid been playing with Fortune, and won all her good gifts! (EFFINGHAM *comes from room in scene.*) Oh, Charles! Mr. Clarendon has rejected me! Won't you fight him? Did you hear how he cast me off?

Eff. Never was eavesdropper so vigilant. And, indeed, your pretty milliner— [AUGUSTA *comes from the room.*

Marg. (*Aside to* EFFINGHAM: Hush! and back to your hiding-place. I—I command you.) (EFFINGHAM *returns into room.*) Ah, me! So, after all, I shall not want my gown! Do you know I am forsaken?

Aug. I was an unwilling listener, madam. (*Aside:* There is a levity in her words and looks that, I own, startles my first opinion. No, she never loved him!)

Marg. Do not go. Now I recollect, I have a few words to say to Mr. Effingham—I told you, a very dear friend of the family—and will in a moment be with you. (*Aside:* No; now he need not, shall not stay.) [*Exit into room in scene.*

Aug. Now to quit the house. I tremble, lest I should encounter him. [*Going.*

Enter BEESWING.

Beesw. Heyday, damsel! (*Aside:* So, a beautiful lass!) Why, I never saw you before? You are not of his lordship's household?

Aug. No, sir.

Beesw. And what—nay, there's no hurry—what brought you here?

Aug. I was sent for to—

Beesw. Sent for? What's your name?

Aug. Augusta.

Beesw. To be sure—I thought so—I guessed it. Augusta Lubeski? Give me a kiss. Tut! there's no harm, no shame to kiss an old man who admired you before he saw you. 'Twas I who sent for you; though I expected Creamly would come with you.

Aug. You, sir, sent for me?

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Beesw. I! And if it hadn't been for my nephew, Ned Clarendon—

Aug. (*Aside:* His nephew!)

Beesw. I had found you out myself. You are a good girl—a virtuous, dutiful girl. I have heard all your story.

Aug. My story!

Beesw. All your sufferings, and all your goodness; heard it from somebody who loves you dearly; aye, and from somebody you dearly love—a somebody who is now in this house; though he little thinks I have sent for you here to surprise him.

Aug. Forgive me, sir, I am so bewildered—so lost in wonder that I cannot think why you should wish to see me; and yet so strange an accident—

Beesw. Why? I tell you, to delight you. I know you can't guess—for I sent strict orders to Creamly—who it is you are to meet. Neither does the person whom I shall send to you dream who he is to find. 'Tis my whim. Enough: as I am determined to make you both happy, indulge me, and let me take my own way about it. Remain a minute—only stay a minute. I'll send one here who shall explain everything. (*Aside:* If, as I think, her heart be in her face, she's altogether a rare piece of heaven's work.) [*Exit.*

Aug. He will send some one—he has heard my story—he will make both happy! Can it be so? If the hope—wild and visionary as it is—be realised! It is! he comes!—it is Edward!—

Enter CLARENDON.

Clar. He shuns me—will not speak to me. Augusta!

Aug. Clarendon!

Clar. What miracle is this—what unhoped-for good, in this place to meet you. Now, let those who would condemn me, look here and read my best defence. Augusta, let me hope you came to seek me?

Aug. Your uncle wished me here; though, in truth, I did not come at his bidding.

Clar. You have seen him?

Aug. Yes; did he not send you here?

Clar. Even now I met him—wished to speak. He would not listen; but, with a motion of the hand, abruptly left me. But he has seen you—has spoken to you?

Aug. He told me he had heard my story—said he would surprise me—would send some one to me who loved me.

Clar. He saw me coming hither—knew we must meet. Did

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he say nothing more? Tell me,—every syllable. Did he give no promise?

Aug. He said he would make both happy—said, 'twas for such purpose he had wished to see me.

Clar. A thousand blessings on him, the good, whimsical old man! He has but denied me to make this present joy more exquisite. Augusta, there is now no bar to our felicity: I have told all to the lady Margaret; and she, as I suspected, bears her loss with more than Amazonian strength. Nay, of this you shall be assured. Then again, dear Augusta [*Kneeling.*] I tender you a faith—

Enter LUBESKI.

Aug. My father!

Clar. *He!* Your father?

Lub. Augusta, I should see my daughter.

Aug. And do, believe her—in all things—still your daughter. You shall know all, sir.

Lub. Let him speak. Now, sir. Or shall I begin the parley? You are a villain.—(*To* AUGUSTA.) Be you silent. Psha! I have seen brave, good men mown down like grass—have stood the din and hell of battle, and this in a mighty cause; since when, it is true, I am something older, though not so old that I should shake at the bold looks of a libertine, or so weak that I should need strength to chastise them.

Clar. A libertine?

Lub. Young man, you owe a debt to the roof above you.—This time, my passion has respected it.

Clar. Hear me, sir!

Lub. You see here all that a merciless despotism has left me of wealth, power, and comfort: it is the only treasure saved from death and wrong.—You cannot possess it; do not make it worthless.

Clar. By such doubts you wrong your daughter's honour.

Lub. I did not speak of her honour. Thirty years ago I loved the self-same mind she owns—a form, but that is little, such as before you. Hence, I know, you might as soon hope to sully a star in heaven, as think to dim her honour. I spoke of her happiness—and I warn you, fail not to respect it.

Clar. My every feeling makes such warning a religion, for I love her.

Lub. Again? Take counsel, sir—do not tempt me,—pray, do not. 'Sdeath! What think you of my daughter—of me? You are here a pledged man: your troth is given to another; at the altar, within this hour, you are to plight that troth, and yet dare

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you, with the same breath, talk of love for her? You have spoken your last word in safety—taken your last look. Use wisdom; and, henceforth, to her be dumb, be blind.—Augusta, I will see you home. [*Going.*

Clar. Then, sir, I speak to you. Passion, a noble though mistaken passion, absorbs your judgment — does me injury. When first I saw your daughter, she was happy in the gifts of wealth and station, I loved her—pray, sir, your patience—I loved her. But what was good and beautiful, ill fortune has in my thoughts made almost sacred! and now, love is mixed with veneration.

Lub. Where—when—did you first meet? I spoke to her.

Aug. At Dresden, when you were—

Lub. Well, sir?

Clar. I had thought her lost, irrecoverably lost, when yesterday we met; I have acknowledged all to the lady Margaret, and she releases me from every bond. My uncle—

Lub. Refuses. I heard him.

Clar. Me he refused; but, as it now appears, only to consent to your daughter. To her he has given his promise. Speak, Augusta; let her speak.

Lub. Did he consent to your marriage with this gentleman? What were his words?

Aug. They were,—that he had wished for me to make both happy.

Lub. And was there no one else to ask? When did your father die, Augusta?

Aug. Oh, sir, spare me now! All is such mystery; now, I cannot speak.

Clar. Here comes my uncle.

Lub. Leave me with him.—[AUGUSTA *and* CLARENDON *retire.* He has shown me much kindness; still, I have some share in my daughter. Stay, let me not be sudden. Even now, he may come to break the matter to me.

Enter BEESWING.

Beesw. Well, master Matthew, hav'n't I surprised you?

Lub. In truth, I am somewhat surprised.

Beesw. When I'm determined to do a service, I never stop to take breath half-way. Ha! you are a happy father! Be robbed of every penny—be stript of every thread, yet with such a daughter, you're richer than a king.

Lub. I have ever thought so. Thus, my friend, you must not think me wayward or forgetful, if I pause before I consent to lose her.

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Beesw. Why should you lose her?

Lub. When she marries,—

Beesw. Why, the marriage of a loved child may, I own, seem to a parent a kind of death. Yet therein a father pays but a just debt. Wedlock gave him the good gift: to wedlock then he owes it. Now, your Augusta, I am sure, deserves a noble husband.

Lub. When she was yet in the blossom of life, in the prodigality of a father's hopes, I promised from her womanhood a store of goodness. With honour can I say it, hope has been outdone by the fulness of reality.

Beesw. See, now, the difference of our lots.—You are a rich father, and I am a poor childless bachelor. You in your autumn, have golden fruit,—I, little but dry chaff. 'Tis this determines me to fit Ned with a wife. For I have studied the matter, and am sure of it; they who live single all their life, when they have sown their wild oats, begin to sow nettles; whilst the married, from the first, plant orchards. I know you are too wise to stand between your child and the wishes of her heart?

Lub. I will not hesitate. I consent to her marriage.

Beesw. What then, she has told you she has already chosen a husband.

Lub. Such communication has been made to me; though I own somewhat abruptly. I will confess, I think there might have been a little more ceremony.

Beesw. But so it is; when young folks are for going to church, they never heed whether in a slow march or a gallop. Then, you'll let the girl marry?

Lub. Be you a witness. Augusta. (AUGUSTA *comes down*—CLARENDON *following her.*) I should have known of this; but I will not chide you. No, Augusta; I will rather think it was your love to hide from me a passion, which could not seem but hopeless. Your devotion, your filial goodness is rewarded With a deep and earnest prayer for your felicity, I give you to the man of your choice—I give you to your husband.

Beesw. What! husband! my nephew? What play are you playing now? Marry my nephew! What juggle is this?

Clar. Dear sir, you surely have not trifled? No—it is impossible. Did you not expressly send for this lady, to—

Beesw. To be sure,—I own it. I sent for her to meet her father, not to marry you.

Lub. Augusta, I am humiliated, and by your imprudence. That my child—speak; did you not interpret the words of this gentleman as a consent to your union with his nephew?

Aug. I could not think to see you here—I could not think

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he spoke of my father. I have been rash—unhappy,—a victim to the strangest events. Let us begone, sir; father, pray come: I will disclose all, but let us quit this house.

Beesw. (*To* CLARENDON.) This, then, is the young lady you met abroad?—To be sure; I see the plan. I was to be tricked into the match: the father, too, was to play a part in the farce.

Lub. Augusta, you hear to what you have reduced me?

Beesw. 'Twas no wonder you urged so well as counsel, when your son-in-law elect was your client!

Lub. Mr. Beeswing—No, in the belief that time will clear me—I will not now attempt defence. But, sir, I beseech you think not so meanly of me. I am the greatest villain if I knew one tittle of what accident has so strangely shown to-day.

Beesw. Accident? No, sir; I was to be the gull, the old dupe; 'twas a deep scheme to come into my service as clerk—

Aug. Clerk! father?—

Beesw. To wheedle my confidence—to profit by my weakness; but you have lost your pains. (*Rings bell. Enter* Servant.) Tell Lady Aubrey to hasten the bride; we are ready for the ceremony. I'll have no delay, though the scullion be bridesmaid. (LUBESKI *and* AUGUSTA *are going.*)

Clar. Stay, Augusta. (*To* BEESWING.) Sir, might I pay the deep debt I owe you with my life, I'd lay it down with gladness. But you cannot ask the sacrifice of a life's peace. My love was first pledged to this lady.

Beesw. Then, take her; and with her, take—Psha! I'll not waste my anger on such a butterfly. Take your wife, and leave my sight: leave the Lady Margaret, and leave my fortune. Now strike a beggar's match; now, father-in-law, join them.

Lub. Augusta, shall I do so? My hand is ready.

Aug. I had rather your hand should close my eyes than now it should join our hands.

Clar. Augusta!

Lub. (*Aside:* My own daughter!)

Beesw. You refuse him—you will not have him—you mean this?

Aug. Truly, solemnly. (*To* BEESWING.) I vow to you, sir, never to receive the hand of this gentleman, unless—my father too, consenting—at your hand. This I vow, and as I keep my oath—

Clar. Augusta!

Aug. May I be judged. (*To* BEESWING.) You will find, sir, you have wronged your clerk. Now, father, let us not stay.

Clar. Augusta, yet a word—

Lub. Not a syllable: you have heard her.—Before, *I* gave you warning; now, you have heard my daughter.

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Enter LADY AUBREY.

Beesw. Quick, my lady; we have no time. (*To* LUBESKI.) For the present, sir, farewell. If I find I have misunderstood you, I shall be rejoiced to own it. And I allow your daughter here,—

Lady A. His daughter! The milliner his daughter?

Beesw.
Lub.
Clar. } Milliner!

Lady A. What wonder is this? I say, milliner. She brought home the wedding-gown. I vow, there it is! Margaret not yet drest!

Lub. Milliner! you blush. Augusta, what have I to learn? Again you redden; speak!

Aug. I will tell you all; but, spare me, not here.

Lub. Here! Sir—(*To* BEESWING.)—did you not bid her come to this house?

Beesw. I sent to Creamly to bring her here. I thought she came on the invitation. But all is such a maze, I'll answer for nothing.

Lub. Augusta, answer you. Explain every circumstance. Milliner!

Aug. It is true, sir, but forgive me. You knew it not; but for many days, I had parted with the last shilling of our means. Then, I sought employment; found it with a kind person I watched from Mr. Creamly's. I was employed where this lady and the Lady Margaret saw me. They bade me wait here for their commands—I came; and let that, the wedding-gown of the bride to-day, the work of these hands, attest the truth, the plainness of my purpose.

Clar. (*Aside:* It is the very raiment. Divine Augusta!)

Lub. My dear, dear child! (*To* BEESWING: Sir, are you satisfied?)

Beesw. No; I am ashamed—ashamed of my mean suspicions. Your child is the queen of women;—(*Aside to him:*—but take her away, lest her virtue should persuade me to injustice.)

Clar. For the last time I tell you, sir, I will not endure the thraldom you prepare me. Though to this I were promised by a thousand oaths, I want the strength to observe them.

Lub. With the leave of these your friends, my daughter may instruct you.—(*Having whispered to* BEESWING.) Augusta, the Lady Margaret has not yet a bridesmaid. Will you perform the office?

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Aug. Father,—I—will.

Beesw. Now, sir, you are shown your duty by an angel: will you meanly shrink from it?

[MARGARET *is brought from room by* LADY AUBREY.

Lady Aubrey. Margaret, we wait for you: his lordship is wheeled into the saloon; the chaplain is ready, and yet you are not drest. Is this your care on your wedding-day? Come, then, I will assist you. (*Takes her hand.*) Come; why, what is this—your wedding-ring!

Marg. Ha! I forgot to take it off!

Lady A. Never mind; be calm—take it off now. In a few minutes, your husband will return it to its place. Why, what is the matter—why will you not take it off?

Enter EFFINGHAM *from room.*

Effingham. Because her husband has already placed it on her hand, and now—

All. Husband!

Clar. Again—again! her husband?

Eff. Her husband, since this morning.

Beesw. More wonders! (*To* MARGARET.) It seems, then, you didn't love my nephew?

Marg. Yes, sir, I did; loved him so well, I always wished he was my brother.

Lady A. Girl, your disobedience will kill your father.

Beesw. For once, I rejoice at disobedience.

Lady A. Indeed, sir! Then let me rejoice that my niece has at least married a gentleman; a man of ancient family.

Beesw. Well, I'm certainly of an ancient family.

Lady A. Truly?

Beesw. Humph! allowing the lion in your coat of arms was painted from the lion in Noah's ark, what of it?—wasn't the founder of my family one of the passengers? I respect his lordship for what he was born; only let him respect me, for what I have made myself. The act of his daughter shall peril no part of his estates: our bargain shall yet hold. Here (*Taking deeds from his pocket*) are the bonds and mortgages;—his lordship was to receive them after the ceremony. Oblige me, and give them to him with my compliments.

Enter Servant.

Servant. His lordship commands me to say, that everything is prepared.

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Beeswing. (*To* LUBESKI.) First, my friend, your hand and forgiveness. And now, a word; 'tis pity that the favours should remain on hand. The chaplain, too, mus'n't lose his fee. What say you? All bars now put aside, shall the young folks marry? You consent? (LUBESKI *bows: to* AUGUSTA.) You hear, your father consents. Be happy, and be sure that I, that all must rejoice, that after so many crosses, so many trials, it was for herself Augusta made—THE WEDDING GOWN.

END OF "THE WEDDING GOWN."

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THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Cedar	MR. TILBURY.
Jasper	MR. ELTON.
Horace Meredith	MR. CRESWICK.
Nicholas Shilling	MR. PARRY.
Tom Drops	MR. BARNETT.
Jack Marigold	MR. SMITH.
Pronoun	MR. SANTER.
Sir Luke Meredith	MR. FORBES.
Rushworth	MR. SEFTON.
Howell	MR. HUCKLE.
Esther	MRS. NISBETT.
Marion	MISS MORDAUNT.
Phillis	MISS J. MORDAUNT

Scene—HAMPSTEAD. *Date*—1735.

*** *This Comedy was represented for the first time, at the Queen's Theatre, February* 16, 1835.

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THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Public Room in Belsize House, Hampstead.*

RUSHWORTH *and* HOWELL *discovered.*

Rush. A change, indeed!

How. I scorn to brag, sir, but I've done miracles. When I took this tavern, the people here at Hampstead saw nothing of London, but its smoke; and now, you sha'n't go down a lane that you don't find lace ruffles and brocade. But then, I know mankind. I've music and dancing—cards—an innocent cast of dice—a wilderness for lovers to lose themselves in—horse-racing and foot-running; and then, to keep the peace, I've twelve tall fellows, each in his day been shown for a giant.

Rush. In truth, Hampstead is your debtor.

How. And yet, sir, the envy of man! You'll hardly believe folks give all this to the Kit Cat club—a set of wits—at the Upper Flask. Wits! I'd as soon have wolves settle in a place as wits; they're always sure to spoil credit. I know mankind, sir; nothing like substantial dulness. Do you make a long stay at Hampstead?

Rush. No. I told you—

How. I remember. (*Aside:* I've lost good words, here. I doubt not his purse is as hungry as his looks.) [*Going.*

Rush. Stay. What is the price of your best wine?

How. I have port at seven shillings that will lift you into perfect bliss.

Rush. I am no drinker; yet that I may neither have your house-room nor a favour gratis—send me a bottle. (*Throws a*

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piece of money on table.) I have with patience heard all your improvements of the village; now, satisfy my question.

How. About old Cedar, the schoolmaster? He's alive of course; scholars don't die like people who enjoy life.

Rush. Yet tell me—

How. If of Master Cedar, I know no more. 'Tisn't for the landlord of Belsize-house to meddle with a scratcher of pot-hooks and a barker of Latin. There never was but one scrap of Latin worth thinking of, and that's the scrap—(*Taking money from table*)—they put upon the guineas. You shall have your wine, sir; ay, and if he be about, and tolerably sober, Drops shall bring it to you.

Rush. Who is he?

How. One of old Cedar's scholars; once, well enough: but now, a ragged dog. I let him—for I know what mankind is—pick up a stray meal. (*Aside:* Doesn't drink wine!) A sneak up that grows wise on water! He shall have a choice bottle, yes, the black seal. [*Exit.*

Rush. I cannot think of the old man, and not feel myself a worm. I thought I had courage for the trial; but with every step from London, a sense of cowardice grew on me. Not a path—not a well-remembered tree—but my heart sunk, humbled and reproached. Guilt has fearful superstition! As eighteen years ago, all things look outwardly the same; but a new spirit seems to dwell in them. A girl passed near me—she wore a face of May—and yet, I had rather met the wicked glances of a witch. That girl! Oh, Rushworth! how like a drunken gamester have you lost your life.

(*Enter* DROPS, *with wine.*)

So—the wine.

Drops. You may say wine, sir, yet call no names. The veritable blood of the grape: for though we dwell in a sloe and blackberry district, we scorn to take advantage of our fruitfulness. True, as my name's Drops.

Rush. I want judgment. (*Filling and giving a glass to* DROPS.) Doubtless, you have it?

Drops. You want judgment? (*Having drunk.*) Master Howell thought so. This is infamous! Sir, I'll not deceive you—this is the black seal.

Rush. The black seal?

Drops. Beware of it—I know it. Whenever I see the black seal on Master Howell's bottles, I know 'tis the mourning for the departed spirit. This port wine! why, it's—but no; I'm too

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much of a patriot to abuse the produce of my own country. I'll change it. [*Going.*

Rush. No; I need not wine. I want some words with you. Were you not scholar to Master Cedar?

Drops. For his sake, I doubt whether I should own so much. And yet, I won a silver pen, and a "Telemachus" in extra calf. Of my Latin, I can't brag. I got as far as *bibo*, and there I've stopped all my life.

Rush. Were you at the school some eighteen years ago?

Drops. Let me consider,—my memory—oh, yes; on the fourth form, the end next the door. I recollect how I used to creep in the last, and run out the first—in a scarlet jacket with round buttons—my poor mother!—just behind Jack Marigold and Nick Shilling.

Rush. Your memory holds, I see.

Drops. I know 'twas behind them, because Nick had lank, wiry hair, and I once got disgraced for pulling it at catechism. Those were the days, sir! How I was loved at that school! But then I was full of wit, sir—full of wit. I'd shoot plum-stones at our usher's red nose, and hit it six times out of eight. Then, for climbing an apple-tree, or stringing birds' eggs on grass, who like Tom Drops?

Rush. You remember many of your schoolfellows?

Drops. Give me a clear head—for trouble has clouded it—and I'd have all the fifty before me. There's that Nick Shilling; I see him now—a poor, money-raking whelp—with a face like a fox. Before the other boys were up, he'd be out, hunting for mushrooms to sell 'em to the market-women. He's now got his father's wealth—is rich—keeps his house, here at Hampstead; and yet to this day, he owes me fivepence for a fishing-rod; we never meet but I ask him for't. Jack Marigold was to have married Nick's sister; but his father failed; so poor Jack, who was to have been a physician, and carried a gold cane, is now little better than an apothecary, and sells penn'orths of rhubarb in Barbican. For myself, I was to have gone to a wholesale distiller—

Rush. Indeed?

Drops. Only my mother died, and so I set up on my own account. I was heir to a dozen houses hereabouts, and—but all's one now,—I distilled them. It doesn't do to think of—and so, your health, sir.

Rush. You recollect other of your schoolfellows?

Drops. To be sure. There was Horace Meredith; he that was so fond of poor Jasper.

Rush. Fond of him—fond of Jasper, you say?

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Drops. Closer than brothers. Poor Jasper! he was nobody's child;—always left at school at the holidays—though once, he went with Horace to his father's.

Rush. To young Meredith's father?

Drops. Along with Horace. Every other time he was left at school,—nobody came to see him—nobody knew who owned him My mother used to call him the stray lamb. This made us all love him: all but that Nick Shilling—and once I remember, when he called him a foundling and a bastard,—

Rush. Well?

Drops. Jasper clenched his fist, and looked all colours with rage; when his hand fell—the tears poured down his cheeks—and he sobbed as though his little heart stuck in his windpipe. But Master Nick didn't scape; for Horace thwacked him soundly. I know it: for I held young Meredith's jacket, and washed his face afterwards. Poor Jasper! He was never a lively boy, but from that time he grew duller and duller—and at last—

Rush. He died?

Drops. No—ran away.

Rush. The schoolmaster,—took he no means to discover him?

Drops. I suppose he did; but Master Cedar was himself in deep trouble; for not long before, his daughter—a pure, innocent thing—was cajoled from him; and soon after she died; people say of a broken heart. Best way to keep hearts from breaking, is to keep 'em wet. [*Drinks.*

Rush. She was lured away?

Drops. Stolen by some rascal, and then deserted. I'm no saint; but I wouldn't wear that fellow's nightcap, though 'twas made of damask. What's the matter?

Rush. Nothing. Tell me,—

Drops. Not another word. I hate such talk—it takes me back to other times; brings thoughts that scorch my face, and —(*sullenly*)—Why should you catechise me?

Rush. Enough. Will you carry a letter to Master Cedar? No: my mind is changed—I will not write.

Drops. I'm glad of it; for I had rather meet a ghost than my old master.

Rush. Why so? He was ever kind, merry, and good.

Drops. And is still—bless his old white head!—and that's it. I am ashamed to meet him. Last week, I saw him close upon me, and I jumped into a dry ditch, and hid among the nettles till he passed. I—you've nothing more to say?

Rush. Stay: this—(*Gives him money*)—for your time. Should I again need you—

Drops. Look in the tap or skittle-ground;—(*Aside; glancing*

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at money)—for to-day this makes me gentleman. (*Is going off—pauses—looks at wine on table—comes down.*) I can't help thinking of that wine. For the honour of the house, I pray, sir, let me better it.

Rush. As you will, for 'tis yours. (*Aside:* And now to seek the old man) [*Exit.*

Drops. (*Looking at bottle.*) A full half! Come, 'tis hard if twon't change for a gill of brandy—yes, certainly a gill—at least, a gill. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Garden, adjoining the House of Cedar. View of Distant Country.*

HORACE MEREDITH *and* MARION *discovered, seated in the Porch.*

Hor. Smile, Marion, smile: for a cloud on thy face is a shadow to my heart. I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife—and we are ten days old in wedlock—laugh me a loud laugh.

Mar. 'Twould be a hollow one.

Hor. Why, then, there's witchcraft in a wedding-ring, and I have placed a spell about thy finger that consumes thee.

Mar. You know it is not so. Our rashness—

Hor. Yes; rashness. We have dared to love for ourselves; dared to use our own eyes—our own affections; have audaciously taken each other at first hand, not waiting for the yea of a third party.

Mar. Every one will blame us—'twas very wrong.

Hor. Oh, ominously wrong. There are good, dull folks who'd doubt of lasting love in paradise, seeing that the first match wanted the consent of aunts and grandfathers. Smile, I say. There; 'tis the very look that first surprised my heart, and made it thine for ever and for ever. [*Embracing her.*

Enter CEDAR *from Garden Door. He steps back on seeing them, and seats himself in the Porch.*

Ced. (*Aside:* Hem! *Procul, O procul, este profani!*)

Hor. Doubt dies at thy lip—'twould kill despair itself. Its touch is as—(*Seeing* CEDAR.) My old master!

Ced. Horace Meredith! Horace Meredith!

Ridet hoc, inquam, Venus ipsa: rident
Simplices nymphæ.

[*Coming down.*

Well, what's to be done with ye? How are ye to live? Turtles

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as ye are, ye can't dine off tares; and I think 'twould puzzle ye to roost in a myrtle. What will ye do?

Hor. Anything. If my father remain inflexible, I'll give up the levities of the town; i'faith, turn Corydon, and tend sheep.

Ced. The Georgics are very pretty reading. In the meantime —while your flocks are coming—how will you get a shoulder of mutton? Love has a very innocent look; but, depend upon it, Cupid is carnivorous.

Mar. Dear sir, pray advise us.

Hor. We flew to you for instruction.

Ced. I wish your wings had borne ye to the next academy. Instruction! Is mine a school for married runaways? If so, I sentence each to separate corners and the fool's cap. Horace, was it for this I taught you reading, writing, and arithmetic—Greek, Latin, French, geography, and the use of the globes? Have I deserved this?

Hor. Yes—yes. You should not have won the affection of the boy, if you would have shunned the confiding friendship of the man. Counsel, advise me; I will be docile as when I sat in yonder room, and your every syllable was law. Come, sir; let me be once again your scholar.

Mar. Take us both for scholars.

Ced. Why not apply before your education was past mending? Now you are married; and, therefore, incorrigible.

Hor. Nay, sir, give us some hope.

Ced. Well, then, I—I propose that—no, that won't do. I —the truth is, you're both such forward pupils, you've quite dumbfounded your master. Silly boy and girl! how *could* you marry?

Hor. Why, sir, the match was made by the old confederates —love and opportunity. Our hearts fell victims to the cherry season.

Ced. The cherry season?

Hor. Sir, the proof. Many an evening had we mingled oaths and sighs: Marion from her chamber-window—I from the garden-wall. And thus, sir, guileless and loving, we should have gone on, ay, until the day of wrinkles. 'Twas enough for us, to see—to hear each other.

Mar. Indeed, I had no other thought.

Hor. But, sir, in a disastrous hour, the gardener left his ladder at a certain cherry-tree. Well, sir, to tell you how it happened, passes my wit. Suffice it—I found the ladder at Marion's window, and Marion's hand, like a ripe peach, fast in mine. She never looked so destroyingly lovely—her eyes were never so bright—

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Mar. Horace!

Hor. Her lips never so red—

Ced. But then, 'twas the cherry season.

Hor. Still, to run away was not to be thought of. I vow, sir, as I ascended the ladder, Plato went with me every round.

Ced. And having taken you to the top, it seems he wouldn't spoil company, so left you there. Plato was ever a good master of the ceremonies; just introducing people, and then politely making his bow. Well, the lady came down?

Hor. My heart beating count—and each thump louder than the last—at every step. Talk of Venus rising from the sea! Were I to paint a Venus, she should be escaping from a cottage window; with a face, now white, now red, as the roses nodding about it: an eye, like her own star; lips, sweetening the jasmine, as it clings to hold them; a face and form in which harmonious thoughts seem as vital breath! Nothing but should speak: her little hand should tell a love-tale; nay, her very foot, planted on the ladder, should utter eloquence, enough to stop a hermit at his beads, and make him watchman whilst the lady fled.

Ced. Horace Meredith, if you propose to publish a new mythology, I must say—schoolmaster as I am—your Venus is a pretty sample of the work. Well?

Hor. I was in a tumult of happiness—in a blissful dream—until I was somewhat wakened by glass rattling in my ears, and a piece of scarlet jumping before my eyes.

Ced. In other words—by the postchaise windows, and the postboy's jacket. You married; and having, like two giddy butterflies, capered from place to place—at ten o'clock this morning, with even less money than wit, came here. Sir Luke, your father—

Hor. Gives me up.

Ced. And your grandmother, your only relative—

Hor. Has done with me, for ever.

Ced. Humph! you begin life with but little family incumbrance. Tut! what a problem have you set me! That I—a teacher of youth—a man of maxims—who would rule his conduct as a copy book—who——Horace, if as I always counselled, you had kept to the mathematics, this had never happened. I ever said, you wanted ballast.

Hor. At length, I myself became convinced of the deficiency, and so—

Ced. You took a wife? (*Pausing.*) Attend to me; you must remain at your tavern: though you might choose more prudently than Belsize house.

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Hor. We last night fixed on it for surer secresy. The landlord, settling but lately here, was less likely to discover me.

Ced. Your wife—poor little soul—shall stay here with Esther. Your father I must take into my hands.

Hor. Stay with Esther!—and I to remain at the inn?—

Ced. Till called for. Silence! I am again your master, and you know my discipline.

Enter SHILLING, *through Porch.*

Shilling. Discipline! Hem! A mighty fine word, Master Cedar.

Cedar. Nicholas!

Shil. Mr. Nicholas Shilling, no longer schoolboy, but a house-owner—a man of bricks and land—a man of property, sir. My father left—

Ced. I can, any day, see his last testament for twelvepence, but am not curious in such reading. Your father was a rich tradesman; a tailor, whose goose brought him golden eggs; and the produce of the goose has come to you by natural descent. Briefly; your father was a plain, quiet man. Respect his memory, by imitating him.

Shil. Respect! I think I've shown that in his monument; the most expensive marble; enough to have worked up—for only last Sunday I made the calculation—into six chimney-pieces. Respect, sir! when I've the stonemason's receipt for the money; no trifle, for cutting and carving, though I made him throw in the corner honeysuckles for nothing. All this I should despise myself to hint at. The affair that brings me here isn't mine only; but the affair of every man, that is, every man of property, in the neighbourhood.

Ced. What affair?

Shil. The peace of families, sir. If houses are to be no more than birds' nests—girls no better than young linnets! To be sure, teachers who'd keep up their schools, may think it part of their trade to bring about marriages.

Ced. (*Restraining himself, and taking* MARION *to Porch.*) In, my child; go you in to Esther. (*Exit* MARION. *To* HORACE.) Hold your tongue. (*Going up to* SHILLING.) Mr. Shilling, did I ever cane you?

Shil. Me—who was the genius of the school; who won nine medals for arithmetic? (*Aside:* for they brought me a guinea as old silver.) Cane *me?* No, sir.

Ced. 'Twas a sad omission; for it might perchance have spared me the future trouble.

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Shil. Mr. Cedar, these are words—words sir, which any man, but especially a man of property—

Ced. I was wrong. I still thought you one of my schoolboys, I ask pardon; first of your property—next of yourself. And now, Mr. Shilling, your business?

Shil. As I said, not mine alone. For when a school is made a house of call for foolish couples—

Hor. (*Aside:* The impudent meddler!)

Shil. When a schoolmaster turns go-between—

Hor. (*Aside to* CEDAR: Do, sir, let me throw him into the road.)

Shil. When, instead of setting virtuous copies, he fosters rebellion to family authority—then, I say—but no, I hope I've said enough.

Ced. Too much, or not enough.

Shil. No, sir, I've done. I wish to treat you with respect.

Ced. 'Tis my wish towards you; but pray don't make the task so difficult.

Shil. It's sufficient to say, I know the whole affair. I watched both here.

Ced. Indeed!

Shil. Both my lady and the gentleman.

Hor. You were well employed, sir.

Shil. No matter, sir, 'twas my pleasure.

Ced. Nicholas, I fear he who turns spy for pleasure, wouldn't tickle to be hangman for business.

Shil. Spy! hangman! Let me observe, schoolmaster—

Hor. (*Advancing to* SHILLING.) Let me observe, schoolfellow. If I catch you on the scent—or know you to drop a syllable of vulgar gossip—I'll beat you past all former beatings.

Shil. Beat a man for watching his own sister!

Ced. Your sister?

Shil. Sister Phillis! I know she comes here—is here now; to learn botany, forsooth, of old Pronoun.

Ced. (*Aside to* HORACE: Come, we are safe—leave us, while we are so.) Go. (*Exit* HORACE *into the house.*) And why shouldn't Phillis study botany?

Shil. Botany! She doesn't know chickweed from asparagus. 'Tis to meet Jack Marigold, the Barbican apothecary.

Ced. Your old schoolfellow; and, as you know, an honest lad.

Shil. I know—a beggar; and for his honesty, that may only serve to keep him one. A pretty prospect for the sister of a man of property. No: Phillis may marry for love, but it shall be love with a cash account. Self-preservation, master! I don't like young cannibals.

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Ced. Cannibals!

Shil. Yes. I am not to keep single, and save money, to be at last eaten alive by nephews and nieces. A rich bachelor uncle, may be a standing family dish; but I shall not provide it. Honesty! 'tis well enough in a fable: but hav'n't I studied mankind?

Ced. Aye, Nicholas; but I fear only as thieves study a house—to take advantage of the weakest parts of it.

Shil. Why, that's the true scholarship—for see how rich it makes the best professors. In brief, sir, I respect you—for you taught me arithmetic,—but for sister Phillis, her thousand pounds sha'n't buy physic—'tis a bad investment. When she marries, she shall have a man of land and houses—a man of bricks. Talking of bricks, I have to view Juniper cottages—a capital bargain.

Ced. Again for sale?

Shil. Yes; Tom Drops—the sot—mortgaged 'em for his bottle. The present owner cannot longer hold 'em; and I hope to-morrow, they'll be part and parcel of the Shilling estate.

Ced. Poor Tom!

Shil. A barbarous hound! T'other night, at Belsize tavern—'twas pitch dark—he held my horse for an hour. I staid, on purpose to spite him. Well, when I mounted, and laughing at him, let him know whose lacquey he had been — the savage so struck the dear creature — the bay mare that cost me forty pounds—that if my riding wasn't always wonderful, I had broken my neck. That's humanity, and from a schoolfellow.

Ced. 'Twas a great mistake to strike the—horse.

Shil. There's one comfort; I shall have his houses — every brick — while he's in straw. (*Looking at his watch,*) I'faith! I've overstaid my time, and I mustn't lose the lot. Farewell, sir—farewell. (*Aside:* But I'll return and watch my lady.) [*Exit.*

Ced. 'Twould admit of question which was the worst; the intemperance of the one, or the sobriety of the other. But this imprudent couple! 'Tis well it is the holidays, and the boys away. If I can get Sir Luke here—can possess him with a liking for his daughter, and after, tell all—

(*Enter* ESTHER.)

Ha, Esther! Why, child, what has disturbed thee?

Est. Disturbed, sir?

Ced. There—while I speak—thy colour comes and goes. What is the matter, Esther?

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Est. Nothing, sir.

Ced. Then hang nothing, if it makes a young maid blush and stammer. Didst come to seek me?

Est. Some one—a gentleman—would see you.

Ced. A stranger?

Est. I never saw him till to-day. I—I was at my window, as he came towards the house. Suddenly, he stopt, looking earnestly at all about him. As he gazed, he smiled, and then looked sad again. His manner fixed me where I stood. He approached the gate; when, with his finger on the latch, again he paused. I think, he sighed; but at that moment, our eyes met; ashamed to be so caught, I was hastening away, when he quickly asked, if you were in the house—then begged to see you.

Ced. A stranger! What kind of—

Est. He is here.

[JASPER *appears at the Porch—comes down;* ESTHER *curtseys to him, and exit through Porch.*

Ced. (*Aside:* So—young, and of likely looks.) Your pleasure, sir; or shall we talk within?

Jas. With your leave, here, sir. (*Aside:* He is but little changed. How beautiful can time with goodness, make an old man look!) My business, sir—(*Aside:* It seems but yesterday, that we were face to face!) (*They sit.*) I would enquire of one, who was once your scholar. Though years since of man's estate, 'tis possible you may remember him?

Ced. I have been schoolmaster forty years; did not lightly take the trade, nor ever looked upon my boys as so much stock to turn the penny with. No: I have ever loved them; for children, sir, are sacred things. Remember! I think you can scarcely speak a scholar's name, that, old as I am, he shall not—I may almost say it—stand before me.

Jas. You recollect an orphan boy—a friendless child—oh, yes—you would remember *him* better than any other?

Ced. His name?

Jas. I have a powerful wish to learn his fate—

Ced. His name?

Jas. He was an orphan and a friendless child.

Ced. I wish I need not ask it, but—his name?

Jas. Jasper. I see you know the name?

Ced. Poor Jasper! Still he should not have run from me.

Jas. Did he so? Surely he had no cause?

Ced. I cannot say that—'twould many a time have eased me if I could. I was harsh to the poor boy—and he had a spirit, gentle as a girl's. I was harsh; but he did not know my suf-

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ferings. He left me, and I heard no word of him. 'Tis seventeen years, last fall. I remember the very night. I had planted that vine, then the merest twig—

Jas. And now, a glorious tree. It is become a thing of beauty to the wall that first sustained it, teaching a lesson, sir, I would we all did follow. How hung with fruit! Seventeen years! Yet there's scarce a bunch but doth, I fear, reproach me with my barrenness.

Ced. You!

Jas. (*Kneeling to him.*) Master, forgive your truant schoolboy!

Ced. What! No—do not speak. (*Having gazed intently at him.*) He is alive! I thank God! he is alive! [*Sinks in chair.*

Jas. Can you forgive me?

Ced. My poor Jasper! Forgive? I—but I cannot speak yet. Thou wert the meekest boy—and I was severe and wayward—I say, I was. I knew it when you left me. I sought you — tried every means to find you—all was vain. I was punished; you do not know the horrid thoughts that beset my pillow, when I pictured you, a helpless infant in the world—a strayed lamb, wandering near the wolves. No parent—no friend—

Jas. Oh, say, who were my parents? That has been—*is* the question of my life. It perplexed my childhood—sent me, at eight years' old, a baby pilgrim from your roof. The voice that spoke to me in yonder school-room has never yet been hushed; it cried loudly within me when I fled from you; still, went with me: on the dreary sea, in storms and darkness, I have heard it; in crowded cities it hath made me lonely—in the fulness of fortune it hath kept me poor. I left your door, a friendless beggar boy—I have endured afflictions, but have known kindness — gathered competence. Still, poorer than I left, I now return—that mystery unexplained—that wearying riddle of my life—that torturing enigma—who were my parents?

Ced. Jasper!

Jas. That mystery clouded my childhood — darkened the days of infancy with the shadows of too early thought. Doubts, and fears, and haggard wonderings, that waylay manhood, met me when a boy. I have seen my happy schoolfellows leave for their happy homes. I have watched them, one by one, depart, some fast in a parent's hand, but all to meet a parent's touch. I have watched the last away—then gone into the school-room; its solitude has fallen like death on my young heart. Then I have felt myself a lonely, unclaimed thing—

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have asked and asked with tears of bitterness, "who were *my* parents?"

Ced. Thou wert ever a kindly, feeling lad.

Jas. Still I wait the answer. After seventeen years of changeful life, am come to seek it. What the poor boy wept to learn, the prosperous man now bleeds to know. I have found fortune a generous foster-mother; yet all her wealth I'd give, and think it dust, to know of her who bore me.

Ced. Esther!

Jas. Nay, sir, you must—you *will* tell me. My father too—

Ced. Esther!

Enter ESTHER.

Esther. Dear sir! Was't you, indeed who called?

Ced. (*Aside:* I shall betray myself to stay.) Esther, entertain this gentleman, my old scholar, until—(*Aside to* JASPER: All I know, you shall know.) Bless you, Esther! [*Going.*

Jas. And your truant, sir—is he forgiven?

Ced. Yes; bless you, Jasper. There! (*Puts* ESTHER'S *hand in the hand of* JASPER.) Esther will bring you in. (*Aside:* Merciful heaven!) [*Exit into house.*

Jas. (*Aside:* How few the minutes since our eyes first met, yet are my senses spell-bound by her presence. Her looks seem to carry peace into my heart; it is to feel new life to touch her.)

Est. Sir,—

Jas. (*Aside:* May it be? Have I, like the prodigal, been lavish in strange lands, only to find the dearest joy at home? Home! the word makes me again an alien. Not so; for the first time, I feel that I may find, or make a home.)

Est. Sir—

Jas. Lady—madam—nay, let me seize the privilege of friend, and call you Esther.

Est. Are we not looked for, sir, within?

Jas. I have been a wanderer; unused to my country's manners—to her speech. If—as 'tis probable—my bearing need amendment, I fain would learn such truth of you. From your lips, the gentlest words must fall like oracles.

Est. We are forgetting master Cedar, and, indeed, he seemed perplexed, unwell. I never heard him call my name as to-day he called it! and I too owe him so large a debt.

Jas. All who know, must love him.

Est. All; but I think my love should be deeper than even

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the love of child to father; for I am the child of his compassion, not of his blood. I never knew my parents; mine is the orphan's love.

Jas. An orphan!

Est. A love, which gratitude must make religion.

Jas. Dear Esther—yes, dear Esther—for the word thrills from my heart, and must be said. A sympathy, subtle as death, is working in my being, altering you. Even as I gaze, you seem changing to something I have seen in dreams, but not the dreams, of sleep. Do not think this idle. I swear 'tis true; swear it on what must render falsehood the vilest perjury—on what should fix with awe the boldest libertine—on the pure hand of an orphan maiden. [PHILLIS *runs in, through Porch.*

Phil. Esther! (*Seeing* JASPER.) Lud-a-mercy! I wouldn't spoil company,

Est. Phillis!

Phil. You haven't seen my wicked brother? I vow I'd rather been kin to a Turk, than that Nicholas Shilling.

Jas. Nicholas! my old schoolfellow! lives he still in the neighbourhood?

Phil. Yes, sir; and though I shouldn't wish him much harm, yet I do wish he was made king of the Indies. (*To* ESTHER.) You can't think how he uses me. I have neither eyes, tongue, nor feet; at least, I might as well have none, since I'm denied free use of them.

Est. It is his love for you, Phillis.

Phil. That's his cry—brotherly affection: when he teazes me so, that I might as well have a husband at once. Then he's so suspicious. He'd search a pincushion for treason, and see daggers in a needle-case.

Jas. And is he thrifty as when a boy?

Phil. Thrifty! Sir, he grudges my canary his sugar; and, as I told him yesterday, counts out grains of barley to his horse by tens. It's enough to break a sister's heart, to say these things of a brother. And then, Esther, to hear how he slanders dear Mr. Marigold!

Jas. What! John? I remember, he was the frankest, best-tempered boy.

Phil. And you can't think how time has improved him. And when there were hopes of his being physician, and keeping a coach, brother said he was so clever: but now, Nicholas sneers at him, and only because he deals in physic on foot. I once thought I was to be married to John himself; now it seems 'twas only to his carriage and horses.

Est. (*To* JASPER.) Does not Master Cedar wait for us

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Phil. I'd forgot. What has happened to the dear old man?

Est. Happened!

Phil. I had run upstairs to seek you—(*Aside to* ESTHER.) in truth, to get you to watch, for John's here—when I met our dear master. I could almost vow he had been shedding tears; and then, he never noticed me, but, without a word, went into his room, then locked the door.

Est. Nay, he is well—very well. (*Coming down with* JASPER.) Tell me, sir—pray tell me, what this visit threatens?

Jas. Threatens!

Est. I am sure, some evil; it cannot be otherwise.

Jas. Cannot! Am I then so luckless, so marked by fate, that after weary exile I must bring back sorrow to my early home? If so, would my bones were deep in savage earth; nay, would I had sunk in sight of land—in sight of that dear England, which with a son's affection I have hungered for! Believe it, I know the true worth of existence; and do not weigh a young man's life against an old and good man's quiet.

Est. He is ever so happy—so tranquil; with cheerfulness enough to make youth welcome age. And to-day so changed! Is it not some mystery—some dreadful secret—I do not seek to know it—that has brought you hither?

Jas. There is a secret.

Est. I knew it—my heart foreboded it.

Jas. But forebodes not evil? Say not so, sweet Esther, for his, for my sake, say not so. Come, let us find him. (*They are going off, when* JASPER *pauses.*) Yet a moment; is not that old man?—yes, it is the old usher—in all things still the same. I seem a boy again.

[*Exeunt* JASPER *and* ESTHER, *at the Porch.*

Enter PRONOUN *and* MARIGOLD.

Mar. Sir, sir, will you miss such weather? I declare, too, here's Phillis. Nay, then, we can all go.

Phil. Go—where, Mr. Marigold?

Mar. To herborise—to take a lesson of Master Pronoun. Indeed, sir, you must confirm my opinion: 'tis but a few minutes' walk to the place; and you will see I have discovered the *muscus trichoides foliis capillaceis capitulis minoribus.*

Pro. It can hardly be.

Mar. True, sir; on the reputation of—of an apothecary.

Pro. Ugh! If it wasn't for my rheumatism—

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Phil. Well, Mr. Marigold and I can go find it, whilst you sit and wait for us.

Pro. Humph! If now this *muscus* should turn out another *vinca minor!* Do you forget last Saturday three weeks? You had discovered in Belsize-lane the *vinca minor*, or lesser perriwinkle; I doubted: you left me to gather it. After two hours I followed. I found you seated, chatting under a weeping willow—a *salix babulonica*—and when I asked where was the perriwinkle—you, Phillis Shilling, like a silly child, showed me a *paris quadrifolia;* or what the vulgar call true-love. After my lessons, not to know a perriwinkle from a true-love!

Mar. Call me for ever dunce, if this time I am wrong.

Pro. But a few minutes, you say? Well, give me your arm—yours, Phillis—and though I doubt if it be— [*They are going off.*

Enter NICHOLAS, *at the Porch.*

Shil. So, madam Phillis! You'll scarce deny it now?

Phil. Deny?

Shil. You'll not deny that this is Jack Marigold?

Phil. La, Nick, 'twould break my heart to deny it.

Shil. And you've stolen here to meet a beggar, that—

Mar. Nicholas, for your sister's sake—in respect, too, of our old acquaintance—fair words. I would not beat an old schoolfellow.

Shil. Beat! Do you question the effect of my courage?

Mar. On the contrary. I think no man makes so little go so far.

Shil. More, sir. For if my courage fails, I can always help it out with contempt, sir—with contempt. Spendthrifts and beggars may cut throats, but the world can't spare men of property. (*To* PHILLIS.) And now, madam, I'll see you home.

Phil. I tell you, I'm going with Mr. Pronoun, to take a lesson—to—to herborise and botanise, and—

Pro. It is true, Nicholas—it is true.

Shil. (*To* PRONOUN.) And is it this way you seduce youth—taking people into gardens and fields, and christening things with outlandish titles? And what for? Can sister make better sauce for knowing onions in the latin? No; then, that for your botany! So, come home.

Phil. I tell you, Nick, I won't—I— [*Avoiding him.*

Enter DROPS, *intoxicated, from Porch. Comes between* PHILLIS *and* NICHOLAS.

Shil. Tom Drops! What brings you here, sot?

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Drops. Business brings me here. Sot! Pay me the fivepence you owe me. (*To* MARIGOLD.) Ha, schoolfellow! (*Bowing to* PRONOUN.) Master Pronoun, I'm your servant.

Pro. Fie, Tom!—fie!

Drops. Well, I have taken a bottle to-day—I own it. (*To* NICHOLAS.) What do you stare at? You hav'n't spirit to do as much. And yet, I lie. I recollect you once treated the neighbourhood to bottles all round.

Shil. I! I defy you. How—when?

Drops. How and when? Why, you cracked the bottles first, and stuck 'em on your garden wall afterwards. Where's master? I have a letter for him.

Pro. Do not see him now, Thomas; he will scold you, be sure of it.

Drops. Bless him! his advice does me such good. "Thomas Drops"—he says to me—"Thomas Drops; many have been killed by the steel, but more by the glass." I never forgot that—never! (*Feeling his pockets.*) Where is the letter? I'll see him myself—I have the letter. Such an odd man! First he would write—then he wouldn't—then he would—and, yes, the letter—is—the letter is—

Shil. Lost?

Drops. A jug of ale it's in the skittle-ground! (*Aside, and going.*) They've picked my pocket to make me treat 'em—I'll be off, and—

[*Is going off at Porch, when he is met by* CEDAR, *who is followed by* ESTHER *and* JASPER.

Ced. (*To* DROPS.) How is this? Again, Thomas? Leave my sight—go. [DROPS *stands, confused.*

Shil. (*To* CEDAR.) And now, sir, you see I've proof! Here they are—here is Phillis—here your usher—here—

Ced. (*To* DROPS.) Thomas, go and hide yourself. (DROPS *slinks off at Porch.*) Nicholas, here, take your sister. (*Gives* PHILLIS *to* NICHOLAS; *they go off at Porch.*) Mr. Pronoun, do you take charge of John. (PRONOUN *and* MARIGOLD *go off at Porch.*) Esther, child. (*Takes her hand.*) Jasper, your arm for your old schoolmaster.

[*Exit* CEDAR, *leaning on the arm of* JASPER, *through Porch.*

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ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Schoolroom.*

JASPER *discovered.*

Jasper. There is a spirit in the places of our youth! It works, and we lose years; it steals upon us, and again we think the thoughts, and seem to breathe the breath of childhood. How have I elbowed through the world!—what strange things seen,—what changes known! Yet could I gaze on these old walls, until I almost doubted I had ever quitted them. Why, I can see myself, a youngster, at that desk; I can fill the forms with schoolfellows but now remembered by the places where they sat.

Enter HORACE MEREDITH.

Hor. Jasper! what—in gloom? Surely, the usher hath set thee a task, while all besides are out at play.

Jas. Fate has set me a task, Horace—fate. Let me master that, and you shall see me play with the merriest.

Hor. How opposite our situations! You, hoping all things should you know your father; I, hoping nothing, because I do know mine.

Jas. You are unjust to him: he will forgive you.

Hor. You know not Sir Luke. His one antipathy is a runaway match. With him 'tis as great an offence to steal a woman's heart, as to rob the mail. No; there's nothing left me but a musket or a spade.

Jas. Nay, I have heard of Hounslow. What think you, Horace, of a blood mare, black crape, and pistols?

Hor. Not yet; I am newly-married, and bound to keep good hours. In due time, the highway may come as a resource. What a villain am I for that poor jest! No—I am rich, rich in my wife; and, for my last piece of gold, when that is gone—

Jas. Matrimony should teach prudence; before 'tis gone, secure a fresh supply. [*Offers purse.*

Hor. Jasper!

Jas. Refuse an old and new-found schoolfellow? Horace, there is a miscalled pride, in my mind so near akin to selfishness, I cannot choose between. If the man I love, refuse my aid,

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I need must think 'tis that when my turn shall come, I may expect no aid from him. This passes for pride; I call it calculation. Will you take it?

Hor. You misunderstood—I—

Jas. (*Taking him to side, and pointing to the wainscot.*) Horace, do you see those marks—deep as though engraven yesterday? They are our initials. We were children when, with our knives we cut them, each scoring the letters of the other's name, and thus registering a boyish fondness, we did never, 'till the hour of parting, talk of. The oak has faithfully preserved the simple pledge; but not more faithfully than my heart, the love that did dictate it.

Hor. I know it—I am sure of it.

Jas. You were my first confidant: shrinking from all others, my friendship took the firmer grasp of you. I felt myself a trodden way-side weed, and you—though two years my junior—with the fine instinct of a generous nature, pressed your kindness on me; humoured me; went wandering with me; nay, well I remember, fought for me.

Hor. You have a curious memory.

Jas. That I have never forgotten: a boy called me—but the words strengthened my timid resolution—he called me, foundling—bastard!

Hor. Why, Jasper?

Jas. Again and again those words, in the self-same tone have thrilled me; like poisonous snakes they stung me; nor years, nor changing scenes, have drawn the venom out.

Hor. Jasper,—

Jas. There have been times, I did not hope to see my boy-champion—my first friend, again. Times, too, when in my fancy—the scene struck into my mind by the bell of the desert camel—we have taken our old stroll towards Kilburn, down by the sheep walk. But to meet you, Horace—and in this place to grasp your hand—fills up my heart to overflowing.

Hor. At a happy juncture have we met. I will take your gold, Jasper, when—I need it.

Jas. Take a hundred times the amount, I should not miss it. At our hurried meeting, I briefly told you, fortune had been prodigal.

(*Enter* SHILLING; *steps back on seeing them.*)

I have wealth. As stout a ship as ever floated, with a rich cargo, safe in an English dock, owns me third part master.

Shil. (*Aside:* As I live, he's become a man of property.)

Jas. Let me find those whose right it is to share it,—

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Hor. Or failing, why not give a right? After so long wandering, seek for peace at home; cast your fortune in the lap of some fair English wife—a wife who'll make your house a temple, and the world a garden. You smile, as though my picture pleased you?

Shil. (*Aside:* What a chance for Phillis!)

Jas. To a worn rover the picture has its temptations. Shall I confess, Horace, I have already—(*Seeing* SHILLING.)—Sir!

Shil. I—I came to look for Phillis; you know sister Phillis?

Jas. No, sir.

Shil. You must know her. Why, she was short-coated the very week you ran away. Beautiful, isn't she, Horace? Moreover, she has a thousand pounds.

Jas. Well, sir?

Shil. Don't say sir; 'tis like pelting an old friend with snow-balls. A thousand pounds, and every penny out at nurse. (*They turn from him.*) I wonder what he's made of? That cargo! Humph! According to the present markets, if he's pitch and tar, he's a husband for a queen; if raw hides, any woman should jump at him: but suppose he's tallow and hemp?—well, as times go, tallow and hemp don't make a bad match.

Hor. (*Aside to* JASPER: Play with him; it may serve Jack Marigold.)

Jas. A thousand pounds—eh, schoolfellow?

Shil. Every doit; and guineas should go with guineas; 'tis nature; and, depend on't, nature is sometimes to be trusted. As I tell Phillis, goldfinches ar'n't such fools to pair off to live in mud with martins. Talking of pairing—(*To* HORACE)—that Marion—on a visit here to Esther—she's rather pretty?

Hor. You like her?

Shil. Why, I—has she any property?

Jas. I've heard she has. She's an heiress.

Shil. Beautiful creature!

Jas. Her father is the greatest sheep breeder in the island.

Shil. And wool's going up. She's lovely!

Hor. In her county, she's called the golden fleece.

Jas. Then her father's forest trees—such oak!

Shil. And we must look to our navy. (*To* HORACE.) Introduce me.

Jas. The estate was doubled two years since, by the discovery of a rich tin mine.

Shil. A tin mine!—she's an angel! The truth is, schoolfellow, I begin to tire of bachelor life; and as I know something of wool and wood—in fact, have some timber myself, I

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sold a bit yesterday,—if marriage could be made worth my while; not that I'd wed a woman for her tin alone. I'm not selfish.

Hor. Certainly not. For the balance must be in any lady's favour, who married you for only your wood. Hush! here comes the heiress.

Enter PHILLIS *and* MARION.

Jasper. Madam (*Introducing* SHILLING *to* MARION), suffer me to make known Mr. Nicholas Shilling; a gentleman who unites to the highest morals, the profoundest arithmetic. He is a tender relative—a prudent friend—and an inimitable worker of compound interest.

Shil. (*Aside to* JASPER: That's handsome.) (*Introducing* PHILLIS *to* JASPER.) Schoolfellow, my sister Phillis. A girl in all respects worthy of her brother. I may say, she has a thousand good qualities, and all disposed of to the best advantage.

Hor. (*Aside to* MARION: Listen to him—aid us for a time to laugh at him.)

Shil. (*Aside to* PHILLIS: He's rich—from the Indies. He this moment showed me fifty pearls as big as eggs. Ogle him, you may get a necklace.)

Phil. I! Ogle?

Shil. Pshaw! I've seen you do it thousands of times. Ha, Jasper! how you must rejoice, once more to meet your old schoolfellows! But I always said so; I always prophesied that you'd come back, the owner of a rich ship—a ship laden with —with—

Hor. Cotton and sugar?

Shil. There, Phillis; I was right. I foretold, cotton and sugar.

Jas. Then, friend Nicholas, you were a false prophet: my ship bears no such freight. Her cargo is—

Shil. Logwood?—spice?—tallow? No!—then, what is it?

Jas. (*Aside; with affected mystery:* A secret.)

(*Enter* ESTHER.)

Esther!

Shil. (*Aside to* PHILLIS: Gold-dust and ivory. Would you refuse a rich husband with elephants' teeth?) But, schoolfellow, though you may get gold and ivory abroad, England is the place for your wife.

Jas. I feel so.

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Shil. (*Aside to* PHILLIS: You hear? And as for a long courtship—why, a fire will oftener burn more briskly in a second, than if you took an hour to kindle it.) (*To* MARION: What say you, madam?)

Mar. Indeed, sir, there are hearts on which an instant spark may fall, and—

Phil. Yes, Nick, and there are hearts that 'tis no matter what spark falls, for like green faggots, they only put it out.

Shil. Phillis! (*To* MARION: Right, madam; right.) (*Aside:* This will be a double marriage; yes, I may say, I am lighting the torch of Hymen at both ends.)

Hor. What say you, Esther, to this sudden love?

Jas. (*Aside:* She reddens—her heart is in her face. Can such joy be promised me?) Aye, what says Esther?

Est. I pray you, ask of wiser, older hearts.

Jas. You have not conned the question? Must we wait some half-score years, then ask again? You do not deem all sudden love illusion?

Est. Not all.

Jas. No: you could not so betray your woman's judgment?

Est. Yet accident may so deceive! What we deem assured love, may prove the phantom of mere circumstance. I have read a story of a child, who, in a summer's night, snatched at a glow-worm, thinking it a gem. In the morning, he looked to find a jewel, and then discovered he had shut up but a worm. May not sudden love be sometimes such?

Shil. Fie, Esther! discourage my old friend Jasper? (*Aside to her:* You wouldn't stand in the way of a good match? You wouldn't ruin a young man's peace?)

Est. Sir!

Shil. (*Aside to her:* I tell you, he's mad in love; and Phillis is little better. You may look; but I would you'd just now heard him sigh, and seen him squeeze her fingers.) But, ladies, you are for a walk. Jasper, look to Phillis; friend Horace, take care of Esther; I reserve myself to show Hampstead to Marion. (*To her:* If you are a judge of sheep—and I know what a fleece is—or if you admire trees, or—)

Enter DROPS, *carrying an axe.*

Drops. Trees! Nick Shilling, don't talk of trees. You deserve yourself to be turned into an aspen; for your heart's as white as its leaves.

Shil. Sirrah!

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Drops. Pooh! you may blow your cheeks into a football; and then I care for 'em just as much.

Jas. (*Aside to* HORACE: Poor Thomas! Is it he, indeed?) (*To* DROPS: Do you not remember an old friend?)

Drops. No; for I wish to be even with old friends; and old friends have forgotten me.

Shil. You have forgotten yourself in your drink.

Drops. If drink will do as much for you, take to the bottle to-morrow. Nicholas Shilling, you have a fine house—fine clothes—and plenty of money. I hav'n't so much as a lath—not a second suit of rags—not a single tester; and yet is vagabond Tom richer than gentleman Nick.

Phil. Why, Thomas, what can have happened?

Drops. Bless your kind eyes! I was going to your house—

Shil. What for?

Drops. What's that to you? Phillis,—who planted the walnut-tree by the garden gate?

Phil. Grandfather; didn't he, Nicholas, years before father was born?

Drops. To be sure; and many a time have all of us here—no, I don't know for that gentleman—hung swings to it in the holidays. Well, just now, I got into the garden, and there was Bill Logs—he didn't see me—with this in his fist, looking at the tree. I thought he was mad, for he lifted up the axe, and was going to work, when I caught him by the arm, and twisted this ugly bit of iron out of his hand.

Phil. What! cut down grandfather's tree?

Shil. Why not? I have sold it.

Phil. Nicholas! sold it!

Shil. I should like to know what trees grow for, but to be sold?

Jas. Nay, but such a tree?

Drops. Bill said you'd sold it; but as I found you'd come here, I thought I'd hear it from yourself. Why, Nick, how many autumns have your grandfather and father, with all us children, sat and played under that tree—and run and scrambled for the nuts, and—no, damn it, Nick, you hav'n't sold *that* tree?

Shil. Why not that? Isn't a tree a tree all the world over?

Drops. No it isn't. I tell you, Nick, go and look at the old walnut again, and my life for't, you'll see your father's face frowning upon you from among the branches.

Shil. Pshaw! Walnut's at a premium; soldiers must have arms. I've sold the tree to a gunmaker—sold it for musket-stocks.

Phil. Then you're a hard-hearted, avaricious—

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Shil. Just like all women: they don't understand true patriotism.

Hor. Patriotism!

Shil. Yes, sir, patriotism. I have made two hundred pounds by that tree. And for you—(*To* DROPS.)—if again you enter my garden, I'll fix you for trespass. Go, and take the axe to—

Drops. Not I. Since you've passed sentence, carry the axe yourself. There—(*Forcing the axe into his hand.*)—now you look an executioner complete, now—

(*Enter* CEDAR.)

Master!

Ced. Why, Nicholas—what's this? Art turned woodman?

Drops. No, master; not woodman, but butcher. He's going to chop up the old tree into gun-stocks. (*Aside and giving a letter to* PHILLIS: From Jack Marigold.) That tree, master, at the garden-gate. But I've cleared my conscience. All I wish is, that when the muskets were finished, it was lawful to give Nick the first crack of his own walnut. [*Exit.*

Ced. Walnut! (*Taking axe from* SHILLING.) And is this to cut down your green old grandfather?

Shil. My grandfather? Not I.

Ced. It is, to fell that tree—for it should serve thee as his image. Its shadow and its fruit should remind thee of his care, and of the plenty he bequeathed thee. There's not a leaf but to thy mind should live with kindly thoughts. A tree, planted by a parent gone, doth seem to have its roots within his grave: to strike the one, doth almost seem to violate the other.

Shil. Sir, I trust I am above vulgar superstition. But since,—

Ced. Ay, ay, thou'lt think no more of it. I see, thou'lt cut no twig of it; but preserve it for thine own old age—for thy children.

Shil. I had forgotten the children. Well, Marion, as a favour to you,—

Hor. (*Aside to* JASPER: Ha, ha! the coxcomb.)

Shil. The tree shall flourish for the children. (*Aside:* That's a hint.) Come, and see me dismiss the wood-cutter.

Ced. Esther cannot spare her. Phillis will witness your better resolution. (*Aside to her:* See, and help him to it.)

Phil. That I will. (*Aside:* How my fingers burn to break John's letter.)

Shil. Come, Phillis. (*Aside:* For now, I'll make her vow to give up Jack.) Marion, Jasper, we'll soon return. (*Aside:* A cargo—and a tin mine!) [*Exit with* PHILLIS.

Ced. Well, Jasper, how think you looks the old school-room?

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Jas. To me, sir, its walls are writ with mysteries. I need must wait your hoped interpretation.

Ced. I said, you should know all I know. Well. I am myself prepared.

Hor. Marion, we'll to the garden.

Jas. Go not you, Esther.

Ced. Yes; let her go.

Jas. For a dear reason, sir—a reason you shall learn—suffer her to stay.

Est. (*To* JASPER: He does not will it; do not urge him.) Come, Marion. [*Exit with* HORACE *and* MARION.

Ced. Jasper, again your hand. So: I feel you have forgiven me.

Jas. Forgiven! Dear Sir—

Ced. I did you wrong; but providence hath repaid my harshness. Whilst my heart dropt blood, I tried to look at peace—tried, and could not.

Jas. And yet with you, I deemed philosophy,—

Ced. Young man, philosophy's a mountebank: bestowing for every anodyne that cures, a hundred masks that hide. I found I could not even wear a visard; and thus I scared you from my roof.

Jas. This place recalls your looks. Oftimes, seated there at my task, I have raised my eyes towards you, and saw your eyes like live coals fixed upon me. Then, I have hid my face within my book, and sat and trembled, and wondered what I had done to make my master—a master kind to all beside—look such looks at me.

Ced. Speak not of it—the recollection humbles me. And you were so good a lad—so bookish, tractable; with a heart for all things. I wronged you.

Jas. Wherefore? Why did you—a good and cheerful man—so frown upon an unoffending child? Wherefore, unless that child was the artless actor in some deep mystery — the guiltless creature of another's guilt? Again, I ask — wherefore?

Enter PRONOUN.

Ced. What! I am busy.

Pronoun. And so I thought—and so I told sir Luke; but he said he came to your letter.

Ced. Sir Luke Meredith! You were once his favourite, and may serve Horace. Let our talk pass till the evening.

Jas. It may serve my friend? Well, sir, I will strive for patience.

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Enter SIR LUKE MEREDITH.

Sir Luke. Good master Cedar! Time, I see, yet keeps your friend.

Ced. I thank him, Sir Luke, he hath had mercy on an old acquaintance. Here—(*Introducing* JASPER.)—is a younger debtor for his good gifts.

Jas. Sir Luke hath forgotten the runaway Jasper?

Sir L. Jasper! My young favourite—my son's companion!

Ced. The orphan you used to talk with. Fortune is not so blind as we complain, for the friendless boy is now a thriving man.

Sir L. It glads my heart to hear it — glads me again to see him. (*To* JASPER.) I would your schoolfellow was worthy of his early friend. But we must meet, and talk of your travels, and of old days. And now—(*To* CEDAR.)—for my time is short,—

Ced. (*Aside to* JASPER.) Go to Horace: be ready with him at my call. Pronoun, will you with your old scholar?

Pro. (*Taking* JASPER'S *arm.*) The best boy that ever said a task. Why, I have kept thy copy-book; aye, and thy book of sums. Thou shalt see them.

Jas. Aye, in good time.

Pro. Nay, thou wert the best penman of the class: and we were such friends! We never quarrelled, but when thou wouldst not write the copy "Honour thy parents." No; thou never wouldst write that copy; never—never.

[*Exit, leaning on the arm of* JASPER.

Ced. When, Sir Luke, I wrote to beg an interview, I did not hope the honour of this sudden visit.

Sir L. In truth, your letter brought with it some remorse; remembering me, 'twas three years since I had seen my old friend—my boy's master. So, I thought I'd even spare you a journey, and repair my neglect. Ha! Master Cedar, that boy Horace,—

Ced. Makes me proud of my mastership. A free-spirited, noble youth.

Sir L. Free-spirited! I would you had taught him prudence.

Ced. Why, Sir Luke, let us not be of those wise husbandmen, who look to have wheat full and golden in the ear, while the stalk is yet green.

Sir L. Tut! I have consented to many of his follies—but when he talked of marriage,—

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Ced. 'Twas a good sign his follies were drawing to a close.

Sir L. He marry! I tell you, he knows nothing of the world.

Ced. He has the less to forget; and with his wife, will learn —what's worth learning—in the best of company.

Sir L. Master Cedar, you know not my horror of these early marriages; of these rash bargains, struck by passion, to be condemned by after judgment. But he has heard me, and knows the penalty of his waywardness.

Ced. And I hope will respect it. But if, Sir Luke—I say if in the ardour of youth, Horace should marry,—

Sir L. I cast him from my doors; he is no son of mine. You doubt me?

Ced. I must. I can't, for the life of me, fancy you snugly dozing in your easy chair, after arriving at the philosophical conclusion that Horace Meredith was no son of yours.

Sir L. Yet your learning might cite examples of the stern virtue of an offended father.

Ced. Yes; a virtue commemorated in bronze and stone. Let's leave it to such materials; for, to my mind, 'tis a virtue far too stern for poor flesh and blood.

Sir L. I hope to be spared the trial. You have seen Horace?

Ced. Poor lad! Ah, Sir Luke, 'twould thaw even your Roman resolution to see him.

[HORACE, MARION, JASPER, *and* ESTHER *appear at the door.*

Sir L. He has not ventured near me these twelve days. 'Tis true, I bade him avoid me.

Ced. And he has been a dutiful child?

Sir L. Aye; for such duty, I doubt not, squares with his inclination.

Ced. Not so: he is in affliction till you forgive him. Come let me be peace-maker; let me, as in old times, give up my scholar to his father. And you, as in the days of his boyhood, will take him home; and, for shutting the door against him, make him the treasure of your house; the pride of your autumn, and the staff of your old age. Horace Meredith—(HORACE *comes down with* JASPER.)—school's up; go home and make holiday with your father. (HORACE *crosses to* SIR LUKE.) (*Aside:* So—there's one pupil disposed of—now, to send home the girl.) (ESTHER *brings* MARION *to* CEDAR.)

Hor. (*To* SIR LUKE.) Am I forgiven, sir?

Sir L. Yes, Horace; but do not mistake me. Remember, the fruit of your disobedience is—

Ced. Cherries: Horace has declared it.

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Sir L. Master Cedar!

Ced. Sir Luke, we have been boys; and should know, if people will leave ladders in gardens, young folks can't much be blamed if they make use of 'em.

Sir L. Go on, sir.

Ced. Fancy yourself young—a ladder at your foot—the fruit above you—wouldn't you venture for it? Nay, I must have an answer! Time and place serving, the cherries glowing in your eye, wouldn't you pluck them? Come, Sir Luke, aye or no, wouldn't you pluck them?

Sir L. Psha! I—I would.

Ced. Your boy has done more than his father; and here—(*Passing over* MARION, *who kneels to* SIR LUKE.)—the cherries are.

Sir L. (*To* HORACE.) One word, sir! She is your wife?

Hor. Aye, sir.

Ced. (*Staying* SIR LUKE, *who is going.*) And therefore lift her to your arms, Sir Luke, and cherish her.

Sir L. (*To* HORACE.) You have spurned my counsel—rejected my friendship—broken your duty. Let us never meet again. (*Going.*)

Ced. Sir Luke—

Sir L. For you, sir, it little suits your calling or your age to encourage disobedience.

Ced. Sir Luke Meredith, I would have walked a mile for every year I bear to stay this ill-starred marriage. By my gray hairs, I knew not of it till this morning. But since 'tis irrevocable—since no strife can snap the cord—no passion cancel the rite—'tis not, I think, the worst office for an old man, to beg forgiveness when aught else is vain. Though a schoolmaster, it has been my prejudice to prefer one slip of olive to a whole grove of birch.

Sir L. He has made his choice—he is a beggar. The world, with all its battles, is before him.

Ced. It is: so do not let his father be the first to smite him. Come, I may join your hands?

Sir L. Never! this hand has reared, fostered, would have guided him. He has rejected it, and it is closed.

Jas. Then mine is open. Be sure, sir, your son aims at your pardon, not at your wealth; for he is rich.

Sir L. Aye, by what magic?

Jas. By that of friendship. If you cut off a son, you make me adopt a brother. Half of my means to the last penny, is my first friend's, my schoolfellow's. There, Sir Luke—(*Pointing to wainscot*)—is our visible contract: 'twas drawn in boyhood, and the man will not dishonour it.

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Ced. (*Aside:* Brave lad!)

Sir L. Think not I am insensible to such virtue: no, it touches me. I can only hope it may not be abused. In good time has he met so fast a friend; for to me he is an alien. Bear witness all, I swear—

Ced. I will not bide the oath. Sir Luke, hear an old man. You know not what you purpose.

Sir L. Yes; to cut off an ungrateful child.

Ced. (*Half-aside to him:* You cannot—be sure you cannot. You smile, as though 'twas easy: no, sir, no: what nature hath hung about our hearts, passes our surgery with skill to cut away. In our stoicism, we think it done; but the wound keeps open, and the blood still runs.)

Sir L. It may be; but as he has scorned me in the dearest precept of my life, so let my oath—

Ced. Peace! An oath that binds a man to evil, is as an arrow shot into the sky, that, turning, falls and pierces the archer. Under this roof, at least, spare my ears that vow.

Sir L. Farewell, sir: since, it seems, your letter was but to tell me I had lost a son. Jasper, if but for the sake of old acquaintance, let us meet again.

Ced. Sir Luke,—

Sir L. Do not stay me: again I tell you, he is no son of mine. [*Exit.*

Ced. And though you told me so a thousand times, I wouldn't quit you, 'till you owned 'twas false. [*Exit.*

Hor. Look up, my Marion: for love, unchanging love, is love even to beggars.

Mar. I have destroyed you.

Jas. Yet there is hope. I will myself visit Sir Luke—will myself plead—

Hor. You will plead to a statue. I have lost every thing.

Jas. Not your friend; or do you think me, Horace, but a vain talker?

Hor. No, Jasper; I know your heart is in your words, and my heart has leapt to hear them. Come, Marion; let us e'en go study the map of the world, for it lies wide before us.

[*Exeunt* HORACE *and* MARION.

Jas. Esther, ere I know my history, I beseech you, know your heart. Again I ask, promise—

Est. What should I promise?

Jas. Your sympathy—your love. I know my suit is sudden—know how few the hours, as hours, since first we met. But passion makes no part of time, and in a single day, may crowd the feelings of a life. I am about to learn the secret of my birth.

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If the knowledge brings no sense of shame, may I, in fair season, claim you mine?

Est. Say, that you learn what to your mind seems disgrace?

Jas. Then I—I yield you to some happier man.

Est. You think so meanly of me? think I must wait till fortune tells me all, before I choose?

Jas. I have so long pondered on my birth—have so schooled myself to hear some frightful tale—some horrid history, that with a word should strike me out, an alien from my kind, that—no—I will not tie you to a pledge, the mystery yet untold.

Est. But if such fears are proved a dream—the brief distemper of an anxious mind; and fortune, with her best of gifts, awaits you—

Jas. Then I may ask you with assured hope? Oh, tell me, may I not?

Est. I give no promise on such questioned terms.

Jas. You reject me?

Est. No.

Jas. Esther!

Est. I will suppose all known—will think it possible that you were marked by fate, a hapless creature,—that you were born in shame—cradled in guilt—thrown, a nameless outcast, on the world. Why, what's in this, that is with you?

Jas. You're a kind advocate, Esther.

Est. And yet, it might be urged, not an impartial one. You forget; I, too, am an orphan; I, too, am unconscious of my parents' state. Still, my mind is not diseased with doubt.

Jas. No; it were impossible that anything so fair, so good, should spring from ill. Let me but learn my history—let me but dare to ask your hand.

Est. Take it, before you learn it. For good or evil—my kind guardian not denying—the hand is yours.

Jas. I take it, and with it, feel conviction that my fears are vain.

Est. Master Cedar! Let me hence.

Jas. He shall disclose all—all; for now, I cannot rest another hour unsatisfied. Go not: whate'er he has to tell, you must listen.

Est. Before, he bade me go. Do not ask him.

Jas. Esther, stay here, (*Placing her at back*) unseen, and hear my history. Nay, from this hour, should there be one secret thought between us? [ESTHER *retires.*

Enter CEDAR.

Ced. He is gone, a rash, inconsiderate, foolish man!

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Jas. And still inexorable?

Ced. Hard as rock. Poor Horace!

Jas. His fortune, then, be my care. And now, my history?

Ced. To-night—to-morrow!

Jas. Be what it may, I cannot rest in ignorance. Now, sir; now.

Ced. You would know your parents?

Jas. Tell me again—do they live?

Ced. I have, in vain, sought to discover them. Twenty years ago, your father brought you, then the merest child, to this roof.

Jas. And where dwelt my father?

Ced. I know not: for, as afterwards I found, he had deceived me.

Jas. He deserted me? And my mother?

Ced. I never knew her.

Jas. And is this all I am to learn? After my hopes—my prayers—is this all?

Ced. All. Have you no recollection of your friends—your home—before you came here?

Jas. Nothing, clearly. I have sometimes felt as though I caught a glimpse, a ray; then all has been dark again. Stay, sir; yet a word. The mystery of my birth, I must with patience, leave to time. I will not now give vent to bitterness of thought, but strive to master it. There is another—a most dear theme, on which I now must speak. Esther.—

Ced. Go on.

Jas. I love her. I am rich—would make her my wife. Master Cedar—

Ced. I paused for resolution; but you compel me to the task. Esther, your wife!

Jas. Do you refuse me? [ESTHER *is seen at back.*

Ced. Listen to her story: as yet she knows it not herself: for months past, I have tried for strength to tell her: listen you. I had a daughter—an only child. Oh, it was to feel the treasure of eye-sight to behold her! She—there are old wounds here that open as I speak—she left her home; left her father's arms. to fly with a villain, who destroyed her. I cannot tell you what I was, when this was known—a demon, not a man. I stood on yon threshold, and breathed a curse, that seemed to fall back upon and wither *me.* Who think you was it robbed my innocent child of her innocent self—who think you, robbed my nights of sleep, my days of quiet—who made my happy hearth a place of wailing? Who,—but your father?

Jas. Mercy—mercy!

Ced. In his visits here he had ensnared the poor child. She left me—he cast her off—she died.

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Jas. Indeed, you had deep cause to hate me.

Ced. She died; but dying, left a creature that did turn my heart to flesh again. That child is—Esther!

[ESTHER *shrieks, runs, and falls into* CEDAR'S *arms.*

Ced. My beloved child! Jasper—(*Placing her in his arms*)—look to your sister! [*Hurries off.*

Jas. Sister! Ay, sister!

Est. (*Recovering.*) 'Tis true, then—all is true—my brother!

[*Falls on his neck, and is supported off by* JASPER.

Enter PHILLIS.

Phillis. That silly fellow! that ever John should have trusted him! I ran from Nicholas, and when I thought to open my letter, found it directed to Master Cedar: no doubt, this is the letter Thomas lost this morning. If I could see the schoolmaster! Lud, here's Nick. [*Hides in desk.*

Enter SHILLING.

Shilling. Signed and sealed—Juniper Cottages are mine! This comes of prudence—this comes of looking to property! A rare bargain. Now, where is Miss Marion? By my life, here's Tom Drops, the first owner of the houses.

Enter DROPS.

Drops. (*With letter.*) I have found it—I knew I had it—never lost it—here's—what, Nick?

Shil. (*Aside:* I've bought his property, and will give him good advice.) For shame, Thomas! Wilt never reform? never leave the tricks of your boyhood? Don't you recollect how when you stole your schoolmaster's currant wine—

Drops. And don't you recollect, how, when you had shared it you went and peached? What's happened to make you give sermons? Go, and count your money, and hold your tongue. I have found the letter, that—

(*Enter* CEDAR.)

Master, a letter—very particular.

Ced. (*Opens and reads.*) "I am waiting by the fir-trees on the heath"—(PHILLIS *is seen listening from the desk*)—"I have prepared all things for our escape: Hasten, my dearest Phillis, and join your own JOHN MARIGOLD." (*Looking at superscription.*) Why, Thomas?

Drops. A mistake. That was for his sister!

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Shil. It was? but my letter-carrier, I have rare revenge. Look here—(*Showing papers*)—the deeds of a certain little estate!

[PHILLIS *comes from desk, and unperceived, lets fall letter between* DROPS *and* CEDAR, *and then goes off by door at back.*

Ced. Peace! Have you no heart? Then, you had a letter for me?

Drops. I had; but my head plays me such tricks—a letter from a strange man: he was just now walking about the house—a letter that—why, what's this?—(*Picks up letter.*)—Now, I see—"Master Cedar:" to be sure—it's all plain—I had a hole in my pocket. (*Gives letter to* CEDAR.) And now (*To* SHILLING), what are you hugging there?

Shil. Title-deeds, that's all: Juniper Cottages were sold again to-day. (*Aside:* Now, for the fir-trees.)

Drops. Well? You hav'n't bought 'em?

Shil. Signed and sealed—mine, schoolfellow. [*Runs off.*

Drops. His! All his! No—no—no! Not if I set a brand to the thatch! [*Runs off.*

Ced. From a stranger—about the house? (*Reads.*) "A sinful but penitent man, who has worn out years in exile and captivity, begs your compassion—your forgiveness. RUSHWORTH." Grant me patience! What is prepared for me?

(*Enter* RUSHWORTH.)

Your name?

Rushworth. My knee will best declare it!

Ced. Villain!—

Enter ESTHER.

Esther. (*Interposing—to* CEDAR.) Father! Do not look so wild—so terrible.

Ced. No—if you have not lost all heart let her features kill you with reproach.

Rush. My child!

Est. His child!

Ced. The child of her you slew—dishonoured.

Rush. No. I deserted—killed her—but she died my wife.

[*Embracing* ESTHER.

Ced. Your wife? And that boy—Jasper—was he not your son?

Rush. No!

Est. Not your son! Not—

Rush. I have but now learnt from a schoolfellow of his strange

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arrival—have just quitted him; have given him papers, documents, that testify his parentage. He bears them to his father!

Ced. How came you Jasper's guardian?

Rush. His mother was my sister; broken-hearted, betrayed, she died, when he was yet an infant. I brought him, neglected, unknown by his father, to your roof, that he might have no worse a master than his happier brother.

Ced. His brother!

Rush. Young Meredith. 'Twas then I saw and loved your daughter—made her my wife; purposed to tell you all—but I was mingling with rash adventurers, and fell their victim. I was hurried on ship-board—was taken prisoner—and am but now returned to—

(*Enter* SIR LUKE MEREDITH, JASPER, HORACE, *and* MARION.)

Sir Luke?

Sir Luke. Let my son speak for me. I have not courage even to thank you.

Ced. Nay, Esther shall thank her father.

Jas. Her father!

Ced. Ay, Jasper, it is even so. Thank him, and ask him, if you will, to bless herself and husband. Horace and Marion are, I see, forgiven.

Enter SHILLING.

Shilling. Is this all true? Esther found a father — Sir Luke found a son—Marion, the heiress, already married, and—

Enter MARIGOLD, PHILLIS, *and* PRONOUN.

Marigold. Myself and Phillis ready for the church. 'Tis vain to deny us. Say yes with a good grace, Nicholas.

Phil. Do, Nick, do; and save us the trouble of running away

Shil. No; though perhaps, he has saved my life, still a little more property—or a friend, who—

Jas. Come, Phillis must not die single. Count me his friend. Surely, I miss another schoolfellow.

Pro. Poor Thomas!

Jas. I must not forget him. Where is he?

Shil. I hope, on his road to the stocks. Because I laughed at him, and called him a fool for drinking away his freehold, and told him the cottages were mine—he flew at me, and had it not been for my dear brother-in-law here—(*To* MARIGOLD: Jasper's your friend—you shall have Phillis; but no thousand pounds 'till she's one-and-twenty.) (*Aside:* I save three years' interest.)—

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If it hadn't been for the doctor here, he'd have torn me to pieces. Then he fell into a fit, and then I left him to go for the constables.

Mar. You might have spared your pains. Passion has finished the work of intemperance. He was carried, pulseless, to the poor-house.

Ced. Poor Thomas!

Shil. Well, I don't bear malice. Poor Thomas! But is it all true about Jasper, and ?—

Ced. All true. And may the virtuous happiness that has awaited some to-day, be still increased at each new meeting of—THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

END OF "THE SCHOOLFELLOWS."

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DOVES IN A CAGE.

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Prosper	Mr. F. Vining.
Cherub	Mr. Wilkinson.
Bezant	Mr. Younge.
Sables	Mr. Williams.
Carbuncle	Mr. Webster.
Janus	Mr. Sanders.
Claws	Mr. Searle.
Giles	Mr. King.
Stephen	Mr. Atwood.
Abraham	Mr. Green.
Mabellah	Mrs. Nisbett.
Prudence	Miss Ayres.
Dolly	Miss Boden.
Mrs. Comfits	Miss Barnett.

Scene—*London.* Date—1662.

This Comedy was represented for the first time at the Adelphi Theatre, December 21, 1835.

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THE cordiality with which this little play has been received by an audience (and an Adelphi audience!) may afford a promise of better days to the despairing English dramatist, at present all but excluded from his native stage by foreign music and translated spectacle. It is manifest, that even an attempt, however feebly executed, to trust to the simplicity of comedy—depending neither upon the glories of the scene-painter, nor the cunning of the machinist—will be encouragingly accepted by the theatrical public, continually libelled as caring for nothing save processions and panoramas—steeds of neighing flesh and steeds of "bronze;" to be delighted only when the mask of comedy is exchanged for a masquerade, and the bowl of tragedy enlarged into a brazen cauldron.

Paris, December 27, 1835.

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DOVES IN A CAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Exterior of the Fleet Prison. On opposite side the house of* CARBUNCLE ; *over the door a board on which are painted two hands clasped, and underneath "Marriages performed within."*

Enter BEZANT *and* SABLES.

Bezant. Again, Master Sables, again I say, be warned; thou'lt leap into a fire.

Sables. And if I do? we're not of one flesh, Master Bezant; I shall roast alone. Fire! phoo! Cupid's a Salamander and lives in it.

Bez. Cupid! I had as soon thought to hear thee claim acquaintance with Prester John. Come, confess; art thou not old—and cold—and—

Sab. And if I be? the older I am the less time I've to lose—the colder I am, the greater my want of natural heat.

Bez. I have done. (*Aside:* 'Tis a sad thing for a wise man to become an ass, he gives such excellent reasons for his stupidity) I say I have done; count upon my help; thou shalt—if thou can'st—marry Mabellah. Enough: how go the markets?

Sab. I—I know not. But thy niece Mabellah, and—

Bez. All sweets I hear are on the rise.

Sab. I prophesied it. When—when we are married,—

Bez. Leather—leather must certainly fall.—

Sab. 'Tis likely. I say, after we are married,—

Bez. There'll be a loud demand for hemp,—

Sab. Pah! Master Bezant, a raven sings in better time. Hear me—when we are married,—why, what now?

Bez. A fear, should any cross arise. Thou knowest not my niece: she is wild as fire—hard as steel.

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Sab. Thou dost not start from thy promise?

Bez. No, in truth. In half an hour, so have I planned it with an honest creditor, Mabellah will be in yonder cage; ay, even in King Charles's goodly gaol the Fleet. How the soaring bird will beat its wings!

Sab. Ha! ha! but then come I in, clear thy niece of all claims, and in the fulness of her rage towards the world, her despair at thy desertion, and melting with gratitude for her deliverer, I take her from a dungeon to lock her for ever in these arms. Eh? ha! ha!

Bez. Provided, she doth not demur to a change of prison?

Sab. Demur! tut, I'll be upon the spot; watch from yonder house with my man,—I now go to engage him.

Bez. Ha! ha! thou'lt never be married by him?

Sab. Why not? He makes two one, in the shortest time, at the lowest price, and no questions asked.

[*Knocks at* CARBUNCLE'S *door which is opened. Exit into the house.*

Bez. Humph! Poor Mabellah!

[CHERUB *runs across from the prison.*

So boy!

Cherub. I hope your excellent worship's in flowering health?

Bez. Whither bound,—for bail, or—

Che. No, master; nothing in the regular way: only an errand for Captain Cheek,—a dozen anchovies. The wicked truth is, the captain loves brandy; and last night,—

Bez. Brandy! I thought strong drink was forbidden to the prisoners?

Che. And so it is; and that's why they get so much of it. I mean some of 'em; for 'tis made too precious for poor throats.

Bez. No doubt.

Che. It's true, master; in our gaol a man must be a perfect gentleman to know what real drunkenness is. It's too bad; nature never meant it. [*Going.*]

Bez. Stay. How are you stowed within?

Che. Full as a hive, and of the sweetest company. Oh, the Fleet is much indebted to you merchants!

Bez. It is—it is.

Che. You lock up such gallants; and they make the gaol so lively—as one may say, so sparkling—so respectable.

[SABLES *re-enters from house.*

Now, there's one Master Prosper,—he has given quite a fashion to us.

Sab. Prosper! What, a profligate—

Che. No, indeed, a thorough gentleman; he owes a heap of

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money. What of that? I'm sure he might if he would, be out to-morrow.

Bez. Ay? then what keeps him in a prison?

Che. I suppose a love of liberty—for to get out he must marry a rich old wife. (*To* SAB.) To see a young spouse handed over to the custody of wrinkles! A pretty goal delivery, eh, your honour?

Sab. (*Aside to* BEZ.: Come, why listen to a fool?)

Bez. (*Half-aside to* SAB.: What says Carbuncle? Hast seen the joiner?)

Sab. He's yet in bed; I told his man to rouse him.

Che. (*Aside:* Carbuncle! I smell murder.) Yes, when an old fellow runs after the parson, it's pretty sure somebody will suffer. Did your worship speak of Carbuncle?

Bez. He lies late to-day?

Che. He'd a hard job yesterday: he tied up a score at least. It must be sweating work to make so many people happy, and some too, against their will.

Sab. Against their will?

Che. Nay, a whole score can't be of one mind. There's old Dame Pegs—he married her to her 'prentice; a poor boy that never knew a razor. Well, he makes her tenth, or—

Sab. Tenth!

Che. Oh, I don't know how many! I know the neighbours swore she had wedding-rings enough to hang her wedding curtains on.

Bez. So, it seems the Doctor is much sought for?

Che. Sought for! there's no getting out of his way. Doctor! he's no more doctor than I am. What of that? he rivets close as any bishop. Then he has a tongue—a tongue of oil and sugar.

Bez. So persuasive?

Che. Bless you, he'll talk of marriage 'till you almost think there's little harm in it. Of all the Fleet parsons—and there's a pretty knot of 'em—he's the most 'ticing. Why, the Bull and Garter hasn't a single syllable to Carbuncle's whole chapter—the Horseshoe and Magpie's dumb as London Stone—the Shepherd and Goat not a word between 'em—and for the Fighting Cocks, they want a leg to stand on.* Then he's so quick—so sudden—

Sab. Ha!

Che. It's hard to pass him and walk on a bachelor. Now, what a terrible thing for an innocent man to open his eyes in the morning, and unawares to find himself a loving husband, ay,

* The reader will find much curious matter respecting these places in Mr. Burn's valuable work on "Fleet Registers" and Fleet Parsons.

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perhaps an affectionate father! It's too bad; nature never meant it.

[CARBUNCLE *(in night-cap and gown) appears at window.*

Carbuncle. A happy wedding morning to ye, gentlemen!

Che. (*To* BEZ. *and* SAB.) That's the doctor. Are ye both come to suffer?

Car. Why tarry ye without? Come in, dear friends, come in!

Che. (*Aside:* Ha! ha! Come in! Cheese in a rat-trap cries —come in.)

Car. Here is Hymen's blazing torch! What! shall it burn to waste! Here, the deep damask rose of love!—shall it not be plucked? If ye are bachelors, blush, pay the fees—they are but moderate—and amend your lives! If widowers, as ye have done well at least once in your days, marry again, and so do better a second time!

Sab. We will speak to you within.

Car. (*Calling within.*) Abraham, conduct the lusty bride-grooms!

Bez. You count too many—I am not paired with a mate.

Car. No! Despair not: fortune hath many wives on hand. But where is the one bride—where the devoted maid?

Che. (*Aside:* Devoted maid! Od's! I'd forgotten the captain's anchovies.) [*Runs off.*

Car. I see not the prime work of the earth! Where is man's staff—his hope—his ornament? His unbought pearl—his sovereign anodyne? His guide by day—his comforter by night? That joy to his joys—that balm to his griefs—that light to his blindness? That gem without a flaw—that gold with no alloy—that rose with never a thorn? In a word, gentlemen, and to save further time, where *is* the woman?

Bez. Look! hither she comes.

Sab. No,—is't she, indeed? Her gait, her stature seems so different.

Bez. Passion, man! mere passion—'twill greatly change them.

Car. Right, sir, right. I've known my laundress in a passion mount to a Patagonian queen. So, a brave lady; and though her face be covered, I predict by the disdain of her foot, a topping beauty. Run, run, and bring the bride.

Bez. Softly—she is attended.

Car. Eh! an officer?

Bez. Peace!

[BEZANT *and* SABLES *retire.* CARBUNCLE *observes from window.*

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Enter MABELLAH (*masked*) *followed by* Officer. *She is much agitated at sight of the prison, and pauses, struggling for self-possession. The* Officer *knocks at prison gate, which is opened. He then approaches* MABELLAH, *and is about to take her hand, when, with sudden dignity, she recedes from him, and advances to the gate.*

Officer. Your mask, madam: here, the keepers must know all faces.

[MABELLAH, *with subdued emotion, removes her mask and gives it to* Officer. *After a moment's pause, she enters the prison—the* Officer *following.* CHERUB, *who has re-entered, has watched from opposite side.* BEZANT *and* SABLES *come down.*

Car. What? cage such a turtle!

Sab. Only for a few seconds—I'll return—(*To* BEZ.)—I have only to step to the Pheasant in Ludgate, and then—then I'll return and—beautiful angel!—

Cher. Ugly thief!

[BEZANT *and* SABLES *exeunt.* CHERUB *runs into prison, and* CARBUNCLE *disappears.*

SCENE II.—*An open Court in the Fleet Prison.*

Enter MABELLAH, *followed at back by* CHERUB.

Mabellah. I am not waking? It is a dream—a wicked spell—and I could tear my flesh to break it! A prison—a loathsome dungeon! And *I*, Mabellah! What can my uncle purpose? What—I am so stricken, stunned, I want the wit to make a reason for his desertion. The Fleet Gaol! And I—I fell not dead when I crossed the threshold!

Cherub. (*Coming down.*) Madam—

Mab. Sirrah!

Che. Don't look so scorchingly—mayhap I can serve you.

Mab. You!

Che. Perhaps—for all I am but the smallest of the prison vermin. Once, you know, there was a lion in a net, when there came by a little mouse.—Can't I run for bail?

Mab. (*Avoiding him, and pacing the stage.*) I thank you, I fear you cannot aid me.

Che. (*Following her.*) If there's anybody in the world you think your friend, this is a beautiful time and place to try 'em.

Mab. No: it is in vain! I cannot guess a motive for his sudden cruelty.

Che. Sound your acquaintance—sound 'em. Depend on't,

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there's nothing like a prison pavement to ring our old friends upon.

Mab. To be shut up, like a felon!

Che. And I dare say, only for a few score pounds. Ha! though I was born in the Fleet, I've often thought, nature meant it. But such a sweet lady must have friends? Is there no young gentleman to whom I can carry a slip of paper? 'Tis early yet; not eleven o'clock, and—

Mab. (*Half-aside:* And at eleven?—)

Che. You may be out. Is there no young gentleman? (*Aside:* I see there is.)

Mab. Did he know this ignominy!

Che. He shall know nothing. You can tell him you want the money for a suit of silks—or a set of china—or for a choice litter of spaniels: say at once, the king's own puppies; I've known puppies go a great way. Don't stare; I take some such letter every day, and twice out of thrice it draws the money. Write—write.

Mab. Leave me.

Che. If not a young gentleman, is there any old one?

Mab. Ha! Sables!

Che. (*Aside*: I see there is an old one, too. And if he's very old, there can be no harm in telling him the truth. As for your very young men, where women are the matter, they shouldn't have their eyes too much opened. Nature never meant it.)

Mab. I will send to him.

Che. (*Giving her pencil and paper.*) Write, and trust to my heels; and if he has so much money in his chest, though I force the lock, I'll bring it you. (MABELLAH *returns him paper—he reads address.*) "Isaac Sables, Crutched Friars."

Mab. Do your errand quickly and—(*Looking off.*) Oh! what accident is this? Tell me—yonder gentleman—

Che. Which?—the one holding the racket?

Mab. He is not prisoner here?

Che. His name is Prosper—a fine spark.

Mab. But not a prisoner?—

Che. A young man of capital morals.

Mab. But not a prisoner?—

Che. Eh? (*Aside:* This is one of the days he dresses to go out.) No—not a prisoner: only a visitor. Sometimes the finest folks come here to the debtors. (*Aside:* But that's a truth.)

Mab. Indeed?

Che. Oh, yes! Parties from the West-end, out on pleasure, take us in their way to Newgate.

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Enter PROSPER, *gaily dressed, booted and spurred.* MABELLAH *and* CHERUB *talk apart.*

Prosper. 'Tis but a step to the Temple Gardens, and—thanks again to the warden—I shall keep my hour. But how keep it? With a lynx-eyed serjeant close at my heels. In truth, I have wooed with ceremony; for almost every oath I have made to the lady has been sworn before an officer. (CHERUB *comes down.*) Cherub! Tell me; how do I look?

Che. 'Faith, sir, you look the truth; you look out for the day.

Pros. There's little of the Fleet about this suit? Tut, I mean I—I for I feel a gaol infectious—I look not a poor devil debtor out on rule?

Che. I should know you at a glance—and by two things.

Pros. What are they?

Che. Your riding-whip and spurs.

Pros. Ha! ha! with these, I'll swear I've ridden hard from Oxford, to keep my meeting with the lady.

Che. A lady! I hope she's rich?

Pros. Rich! Have I not an eye for an heiress? can I not see wealth in a brow—a bearing—nay, in the very walk of a woman? There are a thousand sparks upon town, who've raised such knowledge to a pure science—and *my* fair dame! Oh, I'll be sworn for her! Why, like the girl in the story, she speaks pearls and diamonds.

Che. I wish you joy, sir; that's a wife you'll never blame for talking.

Pros. Ha! ha! I'll wed the wench and—(*Sees* MABELLAH, *whose back is turned to them.*) Who's that?

Che. That's an heiress.

Pros. Art sure?

Che. Certain. I've looked at her eye and her forehead, and seen her walk.

Pros. What does she here?

Che. She—she—she comes for charity.

Pros. Charity!

Che. Yes. She's one of the six soft-hearted ladies, who on Wednesday distributed to every prisoner—

Pros. I remember,—blankets and—and—

Che. Night-caps. Have you had yours?

Pros. Mine! Though possibly the gift might come from a less welcome hand. (CHERUB *retires and talks to* MABELLAH.) By my heart! a shape that wakes in a man a laudable desire to see the

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face. An heiress and charitable—a giver of night-caps! If now a man were in a lawful, holy way to solicit one. No—doubtless she's frozen as Penelope. Yet I'll assail her; though like an Iceland star she twinkle on me, and almost ere I speak, stop my mouth with printed homilies 'gainst tennis, foot-ball, bowls and rackets.

Che. (*Aside to* MABELLAH.) I'll fly to Crutched-friars. Oh, never be afraid of him! I tell you, I said you were a visitor. What! a beautiful lady, afraid of a handsome, charitable gallant?

Mab. Charitable!

Che. He has this morning ridden fifty miles to relieve a friend—a prisoner here.

Mab. Is it possible?

Che. Possible! Look at his spurs. [*Exit.*

Mab. He is about to speak! Good spirits, stand by me.

Pros. Fair, virtuous lady, may a humble worshipper of zeal like thine presume to—Mabellah!

Mab. Good Master Prosper!

Pros. (*Aside: She* one of the six! *She* a prison benevolence!)

Mab. What! You—ha! ha! ha!—you are surprised to meet me in this place?

Pros. Not a whit.

Mab. Not surprised?

Pros. Never blush—I know the whole story.

Mab. You do?

Pros. Oh, madam! all the hosiers are bound to bless you.

Mab. Sir! hosiers!

Pros. 'Tis easy enough to preach fine, philanthropic things; but, madam, there's no mistaking the charity that walks abroad in a real blanket and night-cap.

Mab. (*Aside:* 'Tis plain he knows my condition, and mocks at it.)

Pros. All my fellow-prisoners—

Mab. Prisoners!

Pros. Being your captive, I feel a fellow-prisoner with every debtor in the Fleet. Ah, Madam! when will you hold me by another chain, wearing the golden link about your finger? (*Aside:* Caution, good tongue.) I see you marvel how I knew your secret. Plainly, then, the boy who left us blabbed it.

Mab. He did!

Pros. There—said he, with visible emotion—is one of the six bountiful ladies, one of the half-dozen tender hearts, who last

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week gave us caps and covering. I have done. You will be paid in the prayers of the captive.

Mab. (*Aside:* Can it be really thus? Is my humiliation still unknown?)

Pros. Now I—ha! ha! ha!—I doubt you were startled to see me here?

Mab. No, indeed.

Pros. No!

Mab. I heard your full history.

Pros. Heard it?

Mab. You were compelled to come.

Pros. (*Aside;* I was, indeed.)

Mab. Ah, sir! people may talk of the friendship that is ready to pass through fire and water; but there's no doubting a friendship, when we see it booted and spurred.

Pros. (*Aside:* Exposed—confounded—ruined! Now do I look a pretty rascal in her eyes—a villainous gaol-bird, caught in his false feathers.)

Mab. Tell me; how is your best friend?

Pros. Madam, the—the most intimate friend I have is at this moment in a scurvy condition.

Mab. Trust me, I grieve to hear it. Has he been long a prisoner?

Pros. (*Aside:* No, there's no escape; there's nothing left me but to confess, call for a boot-jack, and settle in the Fleet for life.) Madam, to avow the truth—and 'tis with red-hot blushes that I say it—the friend we speak of is unworthy of your thoughts; a poor, vain fellow buried in himself; a broken spendthrift—a tarnished coxcomb.

Mab. How much his character exalts your own!

Pros. Exalts my own?—

Mab. That though so worthless, you do not despise him; that though so selfish, you do not forget; that though so humble, you cast him not away. That true to your faith, you pardon the weakness—sympathise with the misery of an old companion—nay, ride fifty miles to solace and relieve him.

Pros. (*Aside:* Has she no mercy? That I could change this for the pillory!)

Mab. I see you wonder. Well, I had the story from the man who quitted us. Yes, 'twas he who told me of your devotion.

Pros. Eh! what! the—the boy—I mean the man—

Mab. Informed me of your this day's journey to your imprisoned friend.

Pros. (*Aside:* Am I really not found out? Now will the devil not let a man be honest, be he ever so much inclined.)

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Mab. You must be much fatigued?

Pros. A little heated, nothing more. Though to confess, if my horse die, he falls a victim not to friendship, but to love.

Mab. Love!

Pros. Love! Is not this the day—within a minute of the hour—we were to meet? Friendship! no; 'twas Cupid's arrow spurred my steed.

Mab. A cruel jockey that same Cupid. Is the poor beast sorely hurt?

Pros. Hurt! The groom burst into tears as he took the bridle. (*Aside:* Now could I slip away, and give the word to Janus.) Come, madam,—let us hasten—(*Aside:* Where is he.)

Mab. Yes, sir,—hasten—

Pros. (*Aside:* How impatient she is! all will be blown)—Fly—fly to—

Mab. (*Aside:* I am lost.) Yes, sir; fly—fly—

Pros. To a—(*Aside:* Where is Janus?) To a purer air, a—

Mab. A more grateful spot,—

Pros. A place in better consonance with those emotions—emotions—

Mab. Emotions——

Pros. Leave at once this foul receptacle (*Puts her arm within his, affectedly hurrying off* MABELLAH *in great agitation.*)—this dismal cave, and—and—(*Stops short at the side, and comes down to front of the stage.*) And yet, what would love be, could it not hallow even a den like this!

Mab. What, indeed?

Pros. Love! Has not the magic of the passion hung prison walls with garlands, and like the sun of old, drawn hidden harmonies from out the very flint?

Mab. (*Aside:* What a respite!) Oh, yes! Even in a dungeon, if love be there, we gather amaranth and hear sustaining music.

Pros. (*Aside:* I'm reprieved—though the cart was all but from my feet.) Love! is he not this moment working his miracles? The Temple Gardens! Do we not here tread on soft, delicious moss?

Mab. Is not the sky of Arcady above us?

Pros. Sweet airs around?

Mab. Lambs playing at our feet?

Pros. Birds singing from the boughs! And that grim janitor he is not a turnkey—he is—

Mab. A gentle villager.

Pros. And those two attorneys with their saffron cheeks—they are not attorneys, they are—

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Mab. Shepherds come to tend their flocks.

Pros. True—most true!—shepherds, come to skin—to tend their flocks. Oh! thrice happy accident that brought us here! A twelvemonth might have passed, and no such intercourse of sentiment; but our hearts respond—our feelings make harmonious music—we look with the same eyes—hear with the same ears—'tis plain, fate has willed it—we are one. Still think this the glowing scene that love has painted—think 'tis this I have to offer, and kneeling here—

Enter JANUS.

Janus. (*To* PROSPER, *touching his shoulder.*) Now, sir, if you are ready,—

Pros. Janus!

Jan. I'll walk with you.

Pros. (*Aside to him.*) Hush! another word, and I'll slay you. (*To* MABELLAH) My servant; the son of one of my tenants—a familiar knave, but I believe—indeed, I am certain—very much attached to me. A word fellow. [*Retires with* JANUS.

Mab. At once to tell my story, what is it but to stand a petitioner for his relief? and that were—ha! the man!

(*Enter* CHERUB.)

Mr. Sables,—

Che. Not at home—no where to be found.

Mab. Then exposure is inevitable—I am lost! Can you not hide me? Any where? That gentleman is about to leave the prison—for worlds I would not have him know this accident! He but speaks to his servant, and then waits to conduct me hence. What's to be done?

Che. Go with him.

Mab. With him?

Che. Bless you, I've managed it—I was born here. I've interest with all the keys. Take no notice—trust to me—walk boldly out, and fear nobody. (*Aside:* His servant!) She too shall have a servant, and one of the same livery.

Mab. May I believe you?

Che. Yes, yes; and whilst you're away, I'll find your friend, make him pay the money, and bring you free quittance. (*Aside:* His servant! What a shame to cheat a simple woman! Nature never—eh? I don't know—perhaps nature did mean it.) (*To* MABELLAH) I say, trust to me. [*Exit.*

Jan. (*Aside to* PROSPER.) Now I consider, she looks an heiress. How many thousand acres?

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Pros. I told you, ten—ten thousand.

Jan. In Buckinghamshire?

Pros. No, Bedfordshire. Now, Janus, remember; you promise not to hang at my heels?

Jan. Yes.

Pros. To give me a good distance?

Jan. Yes.

Pros. And do try to disguise your face—do give it a look of simple honesty.

Jan. Oh, sir! I can't promise too much. Only take the advice of a friend; carry the heiress to Doctor Manacle at the Pen-in-Hand, marry her, and give me five pounds—you can't do better.

Enter CHERUB *at back with* CLAWS. CHERUB *points out* MABELLAH *to him and retires, watching at side.*

Pros. Silence. (JANUS *retires and joins* CLAWS.) Now, dear madam—

Mab. I—I—(*Delaying.*) Is that your groom?

Pros. Eh?—yes—yes—my groom. But we lose time—

Mab. The—the horse? how is the poor thing?

Pros. Better—much better. Let us not delay— let us—(*Seeing* CLAWS, *beckons down* JANUS.) Janus, who's that?

Jan. Kit Claws; a brother officer.

Pros. What does he here?

Jan. (*Aside:* He sha'n't know that he's to watch the heiress. Ha! ha! the heiress!) He's to help me to take care of you.

Pros. Scoundrels! Is not one enough?

Jan. The warden thinks not. All your fault: look at you. How do we know you hav'n't a horse waiting for you in Ludgate? Never mind; we'll give you a long line, and you must make the five guineas ten. (*Aside:* Heiress!)

Pros. Man-eating villains! (*To* MABELLAH) Now, fair lady—(*She looks at* CLAWS.)—another servant of mine. Your hand—

Mab. (*Aside:* Shall I venture?)

Pros. You are ill—your colour changes—your hand is—

Mab. The prison—the—the—trust me, I shall be better, much better, when I have passed the gate.

[*He leads her off to side in great agitation, and then exeunt;* JANUS *and* CLAWS, *arm-in-arm, following with mock respect.* CHERUB *watches from opposite side, making signs of secresy to them.*

Che. Heiress!

Jan. Heiress!

Claws. Heiress! [*Exeunt.*

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SCENE III.—*View of the Fleet and* CARBUNCLE'S *House.*

Enter CARBUNCLE *from his house,* GILES *and* DOLLY *following.* ABRAHAM *in attendance.*

Carbuncle. May all your years be happiness—all your children beautiful!

Giles. Thank'ee, sir; there be little fear, I think, o' the contrary.

Car. May all your boys be lord mayors, and all your girls lady mayoresses! May you through life sleep upon down, and walk upon white cambric!

Dolly. Thank'ee, sir: thank'ee heartily.

Car. And lastly, may you outlive all your friends and acquaintance,—and to the witness here of your marriage it is the custom to give not less than a shilling.

Giles. A shilling! Wounds, Dolly! this marrying be dear work!

Dolly. La! never mind for once. Let's hope 'twill never happen to you again.

Giles. There, master. I say—ha! ha! I ha' tricked father. He sent I up to sell at market, and I ha' come and got a wife! Ha! ha! I be only slipped away. Bless'ee! in Smithfield I ha' left a flock o' geese.

Car. A flock of geese! then being safely married, you can't do better than run and join them.

Giles. What a good soul! Come, Dolly!

[*Exeunt* GILES *and* DOLLY.

[MRS. COMFITS (*an old woman*) *and* STEPHEN (*a youth*) *come from house, and are solicited by* ABRAHAM.

Car. I walk here, lest after all the old gentleman may go to the Pen-in-Hand. Three couple yoked this morning, and yet he breathes a bachelor!

[MRS. COMFITS *and* STEPHEN *come down.*

Mrs. C. Not a penny more! Have you no conscience? Didn't I give you a crown and odd the two last times?

Car. Abraham, how is this? Fie! in such a moment do not press the happy pair for dirty silver. (*Aside to him.*) What has she given you?

Abraham. Sixpence.

Car. Humph! sixpence! Well, well, the woman's a customer. Farewell, goody. Comfort your husband—pray, fast, and be happy.

Stephen. La! am I really a husband? Oh, mistress—wife I

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mean—if master that's been dead almost five weeks, only knew—well, how he used to beat me to be sure! Am I indeed a husband?

Mrs. C. To be sure you are.

Step. I can't think it; it was so soon done. (*To* CARBUNCLE.) Please you, sir, and truly now—my wedding knot, is it fast tied?

Car. Fast! So fast, the king in his robes, with the crown on his head, and his sword of justice in his hand, could not cut it.

Step. Not with the sword of justice?

Car. Not even with the sword of mercy.

Mrs. C. Now, be satisfied.

Car. Ay, be so, and depart. Fail not in the tenderness of a husband; and, above all, forget not that to this woman you are married—married past the help of justice or of mercy. [*Exeunt* MRS. COMFITS *and* STEPHEN.] I would the old man were here, for the time—

Abra. See where the old fellow comes with his bride on his arm. [CHERUB *comes on through the prison gate—pauses at back on seeing them.*] Dispatch them quickly, master: for you don't forget the business I spoke of last night.

Car. Last night! Thou knowest my infirmity: have I not forbidden thee to talk of business after three in the day? What business?

Abra. The Mary Anne of Shields—she lies at Blackwall.—

Car. I remember. I married her captain on Thursday last, and—

Abra. You did; and all the men are so taken with the captain's happiness, that the whole crew have looked for wives and are coming here to be married to day.

Car. Are they i'faith? Hush! they are here—the door, Abraham—the door!

Enter SABLES, *hurriedly conducting* MABELLAH. ABRAHAM *stands at the door.*

Sables. Here—here is the house of the friend I spoke of—in in!

Mabellah. (*Aside:* Anywhere! Oh, fortune to have escaped him!) [*Enters* CARBUNCLE'S *house.*]

Sab. She's mine! she's mine!

Car. She shall be! Come—the ceremony!

Sab. Ay, the ceremony: yet stay a minute. First let me have some talk with her. Then, being at my call,—

Car. I enter and make you blest.

[CARBUNCLE *and* SABLES *exeunt into house,* ABRAHAM *following.*

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Che. [*Coming down.*] Make him blest! that ugly withered—no, nature never meant it.

Enter PROSPER.

Prosper. Has she flown or vanished?—or?—eh, boy, is't you? Tell me, the lady—the—

Che. The heiress?

Pros. Hast seen her?

Che. First tell me how you've lost her?

Pros. Just as we turned into Ludgate, I—making love, as never love was made—spied old Sables, a loud-tongued creditor of mine, as I thought, bearing down upon us. Fearing his abuse, and so exposure, I feigned to speak with my servant,—

Che. That is, Bob Janus the officer?

Pros. The officer. I was but a minute, and when I turned, the bird was flown.

Che. Ha! I saw it on the wing, and there [*pointing to house*] it perched. In five minutes, your golden canary will be paired with a rusty old jackdaw.

Pros. Paired! Why—yes—that house is—

Che. One of the twenty traps where harmless folks are caught alive.

Pros. Traps! I'll tear the door from the hinges. [*Knocking and calling.*] Ho! house! house!

[CARBUNCLE *appears at window.*

Car. What profane tumult is this? Who are you?

Che. (*Aside to* PROSPER: You'll spoil all.) A poor bachelor that needs your help.

Car. A poor bachelor! A noisy one!

Che. He is: marry him and make him quiet. (*Aside to* PROSPER: Get in the house at any rate.)

Pros. Gentle sir, I would be married.

Car. And where is the bride?

Pros. She is—

Che. (*Aside to* PROSPER: Hush! if you tell the truth he'll double-bolt the door.) The bride—(*to* PROSPER)—seize the first woman that comes to hand. The bride is hard by.

Car. Hard by! Bah!—[*Closes window and disappears.*]

Che. Sir—sir!—the bride is—what rare luck!—here she is!

[*They stand apart.*

Enter PRUDENCE.

Prudence. That they should have taken poor dear Tom, and have locked him up in an ugly gaol! I—I wonder which is the Fleet?

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Che. (*To* PROSPER.) The very woman to my eye for a wife. Talk to her, sir.

Pru. (*To* PROSPER.) Pray, sir, if you please, sir—which is the Fleet, sir?

Pros. By that sweet ignorance and sweeter face, a country maiden?

Pru. Yes, sir; only three months from Wiltshire, sir; which is the Fleet, sir?

Pros. That is the Fleet. (*Pointing to* CARBUNCLE'S *house.*)

Pru. That, with the two hands—that a prison?

Pros. The—the lodge—it leads to a prison. I was going there. —I'll see you past the gate. Boy, knock for the keeper.

Che. What! ho!

[*Knocking at house.* CARBUNCLE *appears at window.*

Pru. Is that gentleman the keeper of all the prisoners?

Pros. Yes, the—the keeper; (*Aside:* and the maker of a great number.)

Che. (*Pointing significantly to* PRUDENCE.) Now, sir, will you be pleased to let us in?

Car. Ay, ay; wait but ten minutes, for I have much on hand.

Che. Wait! do you know who it is you tell to wait? Keep us a second, and count if you can your loss. For know, that this gentleman is no other than the whole owner of the Mary Anne of Shields?

Pru. (*Aside:* The Mary Anne of Shields! La! who'd have thought it of him?)

Car. Abraham, open the door!—the Mary Anne of Shields!

[*The door is opened and* CARBUNCLE *disappears.*

Che. (*To* PROSPER.) Quick, sir, quick, for Claws and Janus have found scent, and are running down like hounds. (ABRAHAM *appears at door.*) Enter, sir; enter worthy owner of—

Pros. The Mary Anne of Shields!

Pru. The Mary Anne—

Pros. and Che. The Mary Anne of Shields!

[PROSPER *conducts* PRUDENCE *into house*—CHERUB *follows, and the door is closed, chained and bolted as* JANUS *and* CLAWS *run on. At the same moment* CHERUB *appears at upper window.*

Jan. Ho! Cherub! open the door! our prisoner has escaped!

Che. Silence—no interruption 'till the marriage is over!

Jan. Marriage! But a'n't we answerable for him to—

Che. Peace! After the gentleman is properly pinioned, he will of course be given over to the sheriff.

[CHERUB *disappears.* JANUS *seats himself on the door step; and* CLAWS *leans against an opposite house.*

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* CARBUNCLE'S *house. The walls partly hung with old tapestry, behind which doors open into the scene. Pictures of churchmen on the walls; the place meanly yet fantastically appointed.* (*The action of the drama continued from the First Act.*)

SABLES *and* MABELLAH *discovered.*

Mabellah. He hath had some loss—some sudden ill hath sure disturbed his wits? Some rich freight wrecked, or—

Sables. No—no—no. Thy uncle, Thomas Bezant, is still a sober, prosperous, lucky merchant.

Mab. It cannot be. Until this day he hath loved me with such tenderness; and now, so instantly to cast me off, and with such circumstance of shame! I must have deeply angered him. Oh! I have shown myself unworthy of his trust, ungrateful to his care. I have been proud, heedless, capricious; deaf to his counsel, stubborn to his gentleness. He hath given me to myself to show me what I am—a wayward, self-willed beggar.

Sab. Tut! what need of tears? a rich husband makes all sun again.

Mab. Husband!

Sab. A man of wealth, a man of acres and ships, and what is more, a man that loves thee as his idol.

Mab. You know this?

Sab. Nothing so surely. Mabellah, you can love such a husband? Come, speak out to me. Am I a man to deceive you?

Mab. You? When I sent to you this morning, did I not—

Sab. Ay, ay; I feel and own the sweet flattery of the choice. That I should be the first friend thou didst think of! But for thy future husband—'tis time thou shouldst reward him.

Mab. (*Aside:* His looks declare it—he knows my secret.)

Sab. I—I—(*Aside:* I have known her since she was no higher than my calf, and yet she makes me stammer like a schoolboy.) Mabellah, what thinkest thou of five hundred pounds per year for pins, and a thousand for thy jointure?

Mab. This is no hour—I think, no place to—

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Sab. Yes, a canonical hour; and for the place, dost know where thou art?

Mab. In your friend's house—you said so as we entered. But now, you smile as though you looked upon a dupe. I do entreat, desire, that instantly you lead me hence.

Sab. Softly—you know not what you'd leave. Look round and let your heart leap when I tell you,—this, this is Hymen's temple!

Mab. And wherefore was I brought here?

Sab. Wherefore? (*Aside:* Her eyes scorch me to tinder.) To—to find a husband, a spouse that will love and cherish thee. Forgive me if I have tried a little plot to make thee happy. (*Aside:* She softens—now for Carbuncle to join us!) Forgive me, tarry a moment, and then prepare to take a husband who adores thee. [*Exit.*

Mab. A plot! It is so—yes, as the old man approached, Prosper abruptly left me. To give directions to his groom! So, he trusts to the years, the gravity of my uncle's friend to win me to this hasty match. And I am to be tricked into consent—imprisoned—caged up to wait the coming of—

(*Enter* PROSPER, *at back.*)

(*Aside:* I thought so—he is here.)

[*Seats herself, affecting not to have seen him.*

Prosper. (*Aside:* This is a house of cupboards, but at last I've found her. How she'll wonder to see me! Gently, lest in her alarm she scream, and so arouse the doctor.) Madam!—

Mab. Sir.

Pros. Sir! You are not surprised at this strange meeting?

Mab. Surprised? I expected you.

Pros. What! here?

Mab. Here. The truth is, your fellow-conspirator hath confessed the plot.

Pros. (*Aside:* Cherub! No—he fastened on Carbuncle, and I've locked them in—and—plot!)

Mab. 'Twas somewhat bold, sir; an achievement worthy of a ballad. For what is insolence in a needy swain, the world may call spirit in a man with so many acres, such a fleet of ships.

Pros. (*Aside:* Ships! The Mary Ann of Shields! Now did she talk Chinese, I were no less edified.)

Mab. For what wound so deep, that pin-money cannot heal—what wrongs so great, a jointure cannot right?

Pros. Pin-money, and—a jointure?

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Mab. I hope I understood your friend aright? Tell me; am I not to have five hundred pounds per annum while you live, and a thousand when I shall lose the most cherishing of husbands and the best of men?

Pros. Truly, madam—(*Aside:*—nay, I'll meet this banter.) I object not to the pin-money, but I were a boor indeed, to think a moment of a jointure.

Mab. Not a jointure!

Pros. No, by my heart. For once married, could I have the ill manners to die and leave the most cherishing of wives, the best of women? And now, fair lady, who on my part hath promised thousands? I ask it in all the sobriety of arithmetic. Who?

Mab. Who but your graybeard friend, your venerable accessory.

Pros. Art sure the graybeard spoke not for itself? Pin-money and a jointure! Why, they're the special things an old man wooes with—the strong eloquence of infirm age—the burning passion of three-score-ten!

Mab. 'Tis so extravagant, I cannot think it.

Pros. Ponder a little; conjure up his visage when he made the offer. Confess now; was it the radiant face of love, beseeching a heart, or was it grim Plutus, cheapening superfluous sweetmeats?

Mab. You know not the man who brought me here?—have no plot with him?

Pros. Upon my honour—no. I tracked you by the rarest accident. Speak; am I in time to save you? Art certain, thou art not married to him?

Mab. Married—to him!

Pros. Nay, thou hast been five minutes in this house, and the ceremony by the doctor's best chronometer takes but three. If only for a trial of his skill, I'll call the gentleman.

Mab. Not for the world!

Pros. Not! Oh, madam! be warned by examples. I had an aunt,—

Mab. Most fortunate nephew!

Pros. Once, and once only, love and fortune planned to make her happy, as they now conspire for you. In the waywardness of beauty she dallied with their offer, and the wretched woman died a conscience-stricken spinster! This is profitless delay; I'll call our friend, and we'll be one—ay, ere Venus can yoke her doves.

Mab. Hold, sir—hold!

Pros. What sudden gravity is this?

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Mab. You'd wed me? Your patience. First, 'tis fit you know the dowry your wife brings with her. I must be heard.

Pros. (*Aside:* Now for a list of parks and mansions! Coal mines in the north and ships at sea; in London six whole streets; with jewels, plate, and hills of ready gold. Humph! to a broken spendthrift, 'tis sweet temptation, and yet—)

Mab. You think me rich?—believe you woo a bride of equal fortune to your own?

Pros. Fortune, madam! I—(*Aside:* 'Sdeath! after all I—yes I feel I love the girl too well to cozen her.)

Mab. You'd wed me — this instant, wed me? What, if I abused your faith, and with no more words, consented?

Pros. Abused my faith?

Mab. Say, that to become your wife I yielded to your self-delusion—say, that I were false enough to promise lasting love and truth, only that I might fix you for that most wretched thing, a married dupe?

Pros. Mabellah!

Mab. The cheat discovered, what future trust could be between us? None; at once you'd cast me from you for a hypocrite—a snaring mischief!

Pros. True. (*Aside:* I feel, indeed, a worthless knave.)

Mab. Search your heart, and answer. Were I to act such falsehood, would you not spurn, despise me?

Pros. *You*, Mabellah! *You* could not.

Mab. I will not, Prosper—I will not. Hear me. This morning I thought myself the heiress of thousands: I have lost—I fear, for ever forfeited—the love of him who—enough, I am a beggar.

Pros. Mabellah!

Mab. Penniless—friendless.

Pros. Alas! poor girl!

Mab. (*Aside:* Pitied!)

Pros. What's to be done?

Mab. Prosper!—Sir!

Pros. That frozen word—that look of bitterness! I know their meaning, lady; you deem me—

Mab. What in truth you are—my best monitor. Yes, sir, for you have shown me my real worth—taught me my only value—I am but the dross of hoped-for wealth. 'Tis a hard lesson for a proud heart; yet, sir, I thank you for the teaching.

[*Curtseying, and about to retire.*

Pros. By my soul, lady, I am not so sunk, so sordid! Now, might I show my love—

Mab. Peace, sir; and leave me. I tell you, the mercenary tie

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that bound us, Fortune—I thank her!—hath broken; the only fee you pleaded for, she now refuses. Again I tell you I'm a beggar. I see you hear the word, and still you linger.

Pros. And must, to win your patience. (SABLES, JANUS, *and* CLAWS *enter from behind the tapestry.*) 'Tis true, the rumour of your gold first urged me to follow you; but, seeking gold, I have found in you a wealth which makes all other riches dust. Oh, that this instant I might prove the truth of my affection! 'Tis impossible—for your sake, I must not, dare not. Lady, forgive the worthless cheat; you see—

Sab. A prisoner, 'scaped from gaol!

Mab. Prisoner!

Sab. A fortune-hunting debtor, run from the sheriff. (*To* Officers.) 'Tis well I saw ye from the window. Hold your man.

Jan. Like nippers. For a gentleman to run from men like us! It makes one downright melancholy—there is no honour left.

Pros. Mabellah!

Sab. Rogues, let him not speak—away with him.

Pros. Stand off! My blood boils at their touch. I am your prisoner; but I warn ye, stand off. Mabellah!—

Sab. (*Taking her hand.*) Heed him—hear him not!

Pros. Not one word? Not one parting word?

Sab. (*To* MABELLAH.) The doctor—(*Aside:* Plague on him! where can he be?)—The doctor is ready—come, sweet—

Pros. Not for myself I speak; but for your happiness—your future peace.

Sab. (*To* MABELLAH.) I tell you he's a profligate—a spendthrift.

Pros. One word, ere we become as we had never met.

Sab. A bird of prey—a very hawk—a thriftless runagate.

Mab. (*To* SABLES.) You hurt my hand, sir; pray you, let it go. My future peace?

Pros. Oh! trust it not to an old man's keeping. In your deep scorn of me—and well I know the wretched worm I seem—wed not with that winter frost, that canker, that gray money-bag.

Sab. (*To* Officers.) The warden's my good friend—I'll give ye warrant for't, bind and gag him!

Pros. I pray, as I would pray for life, think better of thy fortune. Thou and I, Mabellah, may never meet again. I do not dare to hope it: yet, let me implore thee, do not, in sudden rashness, cast away thy wealth of life.

Mab. Prosper!

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Pros. That word, that look, assures me! Mabellah, farewell! at least, the prisoner may pray for ye.

[*Exit, followed by* Officers. MABELLAH *sinks in a chair.*

Sab. Had he staid, I had been tried for murder!

(*Enter* BEZANT.)

Master Bezant, thou hast scaped a scene that—

Bezant. No matter; leave us a little.

Sab. Leave! She hath looked consent, and thou'lt spoil all.

Bez. Not so, trust me. Go—I'll call you presently. (*Exit.* SABLES.) Mabellah,—(*She rises.*)—your eye reproaches me.

Mab. No, sir; no. It were unworthy of the light to look reproach on you.

Bez. Mabellah!—my child!

Mab. (*Falling into his arms.*) Uncle!

Bez. Ay, your heart yet labours with the lesson—I hope the wholesome lesson,—I have set it.

Mab. Lesson!

Bez. Tell me; what think you of this passionate swain—this generous youth enamoured of pounds sterling? Are you now convinced? See you not he has sought you as so much senseless gold—wooed you as the vulgar instrument of his poor vanities?

Mab. You knew his suit?

Bez. Mabellah, there came an orphan—a helpless yeanling to my roof; that babe is now a woman; but the eye that watched her infancy, as it had gathered strength from what it tended, is waking, watchful still. From the first I knew the villain's purpose.

Mab. Uncle!

Bez. I say—villain. Would he not have snared ye? Day after day (I knew the place, the very point of time,) hath he not met you with a lie upon his lip,—your fancied wealth the thing he smiled for—yourself the worthless vessel to be cast to winds and waves as soon as plundered?

Mab. No—no!

Bez. Then have I lost my pains: you love him still—love with a hopeless love?

Mab. Hopeless!

Bez. In his eyes are you not poor, unfriended—and, forsaken by the world, the passionate lover leaves you to its mercies?

Mab. What aid—what help could he bestow? Himself a prisoner.—

Bez. Ay, I thank the chance that's caged him.

Mab. Uncle!

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Bez. He is fixed—past hope of freedom. Nay, I know his state, his certain destitution. If some wealthy matron open not his prison door, 'tis shut upon him for his life. So may it be!

Mab. Say not so, dear uncle—say not so!

Bez. He would have doomed you to the worst captivity of human days—a miserable marriage. So may he linger out his years, a pent-up, selfish spendthrift! So may his eyes fade before prison walls—his head grow gray beneath a prison roof! For you, Mabellah, there's fortune, happiness: wedding a wealthy, honourable man—

Mab. And Prosper still a prisoner? Never! or, on my bridal-day, may peace for ever leave me! Oh, sir! indeed you do him wrong; he is not the heartless thing you name him. No—he is kind, generous, noble.

Bez. Mabellah!

Mab. Nay, sir, despite that incredulous look—that cold, pitying smile—I will, I must plead for him. Grant him wild, wavering, extravagant; with every folly, every fault of youth; still, he hath a heart of untouched goodness.

Bez. Infatuation.

Mab. My life upon the proof, could proof be made!

Bez. It shall be made. I will release him from his present bonds. Stay, on this condition—your solemn promise never more to see him? Well, I'll not exact so much; but should he as the price of freedom willingly forego your love—

Mab. He will not!

Bez. Should he consent to quit England, I'll find the means, for some far distant country,—

Mab. He will not leave me!

Bez. Why, then, you pledge to cast him from your thoughts, as he renounces you? I see, you fear to promise?

Mab. In the deep assurance of his faith, I promise!

Bez. Faith! your self-delusion—what other token?

Mab. His last look—his parting words. Oh! his heart beamed in his eyes, and I heard his secret soul.

Bez. Well; to the proof. His freedom offered, he will desert you.

Mab. Never—never! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The room (miserably furnished) of* PROSPER, *in the Fleet Prison.*

PROSPER *discovered*—CHERUB *waiting.*

Cherub. There never was such an escape!

Prosper. You've told me so.

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Che. I got off marriage only because I hadn't the fees. With money in my pocket, I had been a lost man. As for the old gentleman, by this time 'tis all over with him. Oh! I heard him, as I ran down stairs, tell the doctor to prepare. Well, since the woman proves no heiress, you have had a lucky miss.

Pros. Peace. I am tired—perplexed—and—

Che. Hungry, no doubt; and not a penny for your stomach?

Pros. Even so, fellow, I am a hopeless beggar. (*Aside:* And she will marry him—she will wed the dotard; for so much gold become his lawful victim! Oh, money! money! thou mischief in the hands of fools, thou best of servants to the wise! In what vain riots, what mad mirth, have I destroyed the means of truest peace! She will marry him!)

Che. Not a penny? and 'tis clear the keepers know it.

Pros. Every source exhausted—my creditors, and justly let me own, inexorable, what are my hopes? My future days doomed to a prison—to sink, step by step, till I become the outcast of a gaol! To—(*To* CHERUB)—why do you linger? Go—at least I am left the privacy of this miserable nook.

Che. Be not angry with me; I—I only wait to say the sayings of the keepers. The prison's crowded—rooms, no bigger than bird-cages, are crammed with eight and ten; now, you alone occupy this superb and spacious apartment.

Pros. 'Twas my covenant with the warden.

Che. True; but, so says his deputy, the covenant ran that you should pay rent for it. I am told to tell you, what doubtless you know; there are three weeks due, and money's ever welcome.

Pros. I—I'll look to it—begone.

Che. It must be paid, they swear, this very day: and more, as out of special grace you have till now been charged only one pound a week, if you would keep it to yourself, the room must henceforth be forty shillings.

Pros. Double!

Che. Double. The prison's filling and rents are on the rise: then there's some of the moveables about the room hired from Lynx, the second key: he has given me here the list and prices, and begs for payment.

Pros. Harpies!

Che. (*Reading paper.*) "Hired, and to be paid for weekly. To bed, blanket, and bolster,"—

Pros. A couch scarce fit for a hound.

Che. "Five-and-twenty-shillings. To a table, one chair, and a three-legged stool, eighteen and sixpence."

Pros. What!

Che. The prison's choked with customers—even three-legged

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stools are going up. "To a cork-screw, nutmeg-grater, boot-jack, and pair of bellows, five and a penny. To a"—

Pros. Pshaw! hang the items! astound me with the sum in full.

Che. Ha, sir! pardon me if I say it, but that's the fault that brings so many people here. They cry, "hang the items," and then wonder when they're knocked down by the sum in full. The whole weekly amount, sir, three pounds, one and twopence.

Pros. Knocked down, indeed!

Che. And, sir, Lynx vows he can't give a minute's further credit, his profits being so very small.

Pros. Small! the horseleech!

Che. All your hasty inexperience. For who, that knows anything of the Fleet, would pay for such things by the week? No, sir; any friend who wished you well, would have advised you to hire 'em by the twelvemonth.

Pros. (*Aside:* Or, in my case, to have bought a life-possession.)

Enter BEZANT.

Bezant. Your name is Prosper?

Pros. I think so; as I think this my apartment; though, by the way you enter, I may reasonably question it.

Bez. Oh, sir! he who brings good news may waive all ceremony.

Che. Good news!

Bez. May we talk together?

Che. I'm gone, sir. (*Aside to* PROSPER: I know they'll set upon me open-mouthed for money, but, for a time, I'll try and cram their throats with only good news.) [*Exit.*

Pros. Now, sir?

Bez. Master Prosper, you are here fast bound by heavy debts.

Pros. Sir, I listen for your news.

Bez. Your patrimony squandered—no kindred, friends, to help you.

Pros. Your news, sir?

Bez. The keepers showed me a prisoner in the court below: for thirty years, they told me, he had withered in this gaol. I marked him; he looked the grisly spectre of a man: yet was he, said they, once of as high and gallant bearing, ay, as yourself.

Pros. I, too, have seen this ghost. Well, sir?

Bez. Tell me; what is to stand between you and such an end? What reasonable hope that Prosper shall not to the next generation of fools and spendthrifts who may waste here, show

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the like miserable apparition, the same wan shadow of his present self?

Pros. There is no hope—none.

Bez. Yes, your debts shall be discharged.

Pros. What!

Bez. Your prison door be opened,—more, the means of future competence secured you.

Pros. And who will work this miracle?

Bez. It shall be done.

Pros. But how am I to earn this shower of fortune?

Bez. The motion of a finger makes it yours. Quickly, sign this paper.

Pros. So. (*About to take it, pauses.*) What may be its obligation?

Bez. You have some time followed a lady named Mabellah—

Pros. Well?—

Bez. By signing this deed you gain all that urged you to the suit, with this further profit—you take no wife.

Pros. Oh! sir, I am instructed. The wife is sought for by another, is she not?

Bez. She is.

Pros. A serious, venerable man of—I know not how many score? Say, is it he or the lady's uncle who'd pay the price of my deliverance?

Bez. Her uncle! Alas, he hath no longer the means.

Pros. Not?

Bez. No. 'Tis the gentleman who'd wed her, who offers freedom, but with this condition: that you sail from England, if possible, this very night. Come, sir, your signature.

Pros. Doth the lady ask it?

Bez. In the Indies, wealth and pleasure may be found. Pause not—sign.

Pros. Doth Mabellah ask it?

Bez. Means of speedy fortune—ample means are offered. Sign, sir, sign.

Pros. Your answer—as a gentleman—your answer. Doth Mabellah require my hand to this?

Bez. I will not say it; no, not Mabellah.

Pros. Then, sir, take back the paper: for I would sooner thrust my hand within a fire, than fix it to that deed.

Bez. Tut! for what did you pursue the lady?

Pros. For wealth—mere wealth; I own the poverty of mind that urged me. I cared not for her love—I sought her gold, but in her pure soul I've seen my worthlessness reflected, and I no longer ask her fortune but her heart.

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Bez. Mere rhapsody. (*Pointing from window.*) Look below there, and be wise. Do you see that ghastly monitor?

Pros. The miserable man you spoke of? How the poor wretch drags his shaking limbs into the sun!

Bez. Ay, you will sign the deed?

Pros. No! and let that word suffice. You hear my answer?

Bez. You will amend it—I am sure you will. In the court, I'll walk and wait your better reason.

Pros. Your time's your own, sir; use it as you list. (*Exit* BEZANT.) What! yield her—make a selfish bargain of her happiness—sign her, for so much gold, the victim—

(*Enter* CHERUB.)

What now?

Che. Oh, sir! was ever man so lucky as yourself! You'll own your fortune when you hear my story: 'tis just come to the gate. The uncle of your heiress—the city rings with the tale—the prince of merchants, as they called him,—

Pros. Well?

Che. Lost, broken, utterly gone! Three ships sunk in one tempest—two taken by the enemy—a warehouse at Barbadoes burnt—and, oh, sir! thank your friendly stars, he hasn't a shilling.

Pros. Is't possible? poor gentleman!

Che. But, sir, you should rejoice.

Pros. Begone, fellow! were he my sworn enemy, in such an hour I'd pluck my heart out could it beat with gladness. Leave me. Poor gentleman!

Che. Poor gentleman! say I: but, see you, had you taken his niece for wife, you had been prisoner all your mortal days. The Great Mogul could not have helped you. When you know what's happened to his niece!

Pros. To Mabellah? Speak.

Che. She had a venture, I think they call it, with her uncle; and, somehow—as I never had anything, I know not how such things are done—somehow, they have made Madam Mabellah partner with Master Bezant, and so with him, she owes I cannot count how many thousands.

Pros. Mabellah!

Che. And what's worse, 'tis said old Sables, the man who wants to marry her, is the hardest creditor. For Master Bezant, he hath either drowned himself or run away: he is not to be found.

Pros. Go, good fellow. Why do you wait?

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Che. The deputy warden has no ears except in his pocket. I told him you were promised good news, I can see by your face you have had none, but still he asked for his money. Good sir, be advised; give up the room quietly.

Pros. What!

Che. They bid me say 'tis wanted; and further, that you may lodge in forty-two, which has but five at present. You'll not dispute the order?

Pros. And why not?

Che. Because—because, there is the strong-room for the riotous,—and the deputy—

Pros. Tell him, I will not stir. Go, bear my message; I warn you, do not tempt me in my present mind.

Che. Think again, sir.

Pros. I have thought—the door is open—you know the stairs. Wait here one minute, and—

Che. Take counsel, sir: fling me down stairs, and you'll hurt the prisoner coming up. Hark! hear you the footsteps!

Pros. Why, then, I'll see—

[*Is about to thrust* CHERUB *from room, when* MABELLAH *is shown on by* JANUS.

Che. The prisoner!

Pros. Mabellah!

Janus. Now, sir, you have heard—your room is wanted. This lady is—

Pros. Peace. I know my service. (JANUS *and* CHERUB *retire.*) Oh, Mabellah! is fortune so malignant?

Mab. Fortune! till now she has given me hourly gifts of goodness: should I repine if one day she forget me?

Pros. So calm—and in this wretched place?

Mab. 'Tis not so wretched, but a trusting heart, a spirit clear of wrong, may learn to dwell in it.

Pros. Dwell here! shut in by these blank walls?

Mab. Blank! nay, prison walls are writ with golden lessons, Prosper; themes we never dream of in the open world—deep truths, rare knowledge. I trust, to prove a hard, yet cheerful student.

Pros. (*Aside:* This cannot be: no, her pride is struggling with her heart, and the unseen tear burns in her eye.) (*To* CHERUB, *aside.* That man—has he left the prison?)

Che. No; even now he was talking to—

Pros. Enough. (*Aside:* I'll sign the deed—she shall be free!) Mabellah, thou art deceived—this is no school for gentleness like thine. [*Exit, followed by* JANUS.

Mab. Whither is he gone?

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Che. To find Master Bezant, he walks in the court there. (*They look from window.*) As I left the doctor's he gave me a guinea to say as he should bid me, not to discover him, nor,—see!—

Mab. Prosper joins him.

Che. He takes him by the hand, and now your uncle presents a paper and—provident old gentleman!—he has brought an ink-horn with him.

Mab. He'll sign the deed!

Che. He has signed it, and now, Janus writes his name as witness.

Mab. Lost! lost! [*Sinks in a chair.* *Exit* CHERUB.

Enter PROSPER.

Pros. You are free—you are saved!

Mab. Lost! lost!

Pros. No, I have signed the bond, bound myself to exile, to leave you, ay, this very hour. But you are restored; yes, the penalty is paid, and you are free.

Mab. Free! I tell you that act has bound me in the worst of bondage—'tis thy hand hath riveted a life-long chain.

Pros. No; my absence is alone required; that alone is made the price of your release, a quittance of all claims: you are free—untrammelled.

Mab. Bound, I say—bound past hope, to wed the man you bade me hate!

Enter BEZANT *and* CHERUB (*unseen*)—*they stand at back.*

Pros. By what contract?

Mab. A promise solemnly made. I knew you would be tempted by that deed—tempted with freedom—and I pledged myself to wed that man, should you accept the offered bond.

Pros. What urged you to so wild a fault?

Mab. Ignorance; I thought I knew your heart, Prosper; as you say, it was a fault, I knew it not.

Pros. Spare that reproach; for by my soul 'tis not deserved. May every common joy of being leave me, if for thy sake alone I have not done this; if for thy present comfort, future peace, I have not doomed myself an outcast from my country, a hopeless wanderer. Could I behold you pining here, shut from a happy world?

Mab. Nay, I could have found happiness—yes, here, a fairer world than that to which you've doomed me.

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Pros. What hope remained? With claims so crushing, who —who could have restored you—who?

Mab. True, sir, true; you have done wisely, prudently; at least, I'll strive to think it. Who, indeed? Farewell!

Pros. Stay—I did not dare to make—to think the offer. I hoped to give you to the world, that you might win a worthier, richer choice. Mabellah, let me break the bond.

Mab. Prosper!

Pros. Incur the forfeit, make thy obligations mine, and give thee freedom.

Mab. Shall I buy liberty at such a cost?

Pros. This to me will be no prison, Mabellah, if sometimes thou wilt visit it. If I go hence, I go into a life's captivity—here, and calling thee mine, 'tis freedom—blessed liberty. What! I have hands, strength, health; will learn some honest craft, think no drudgery vile, so thou wilt sometimes breathe the music of a loving heart, wilt look the recompense of loving eyes!

Mab. Prosper! No—the bond—my word—

Bez. (*Coming down.*) The bond is yours.

Mab. Uncle!

Pros. He—Bezant!

Bez. And for my word, I do not claim it. Choose where thou wilt, thou'rt free to do so.

Mab. Prosper?

Bez. Ay, for I have proved him. I had no other end in all my this day's plans. The spendthrift is reclaimed, the fortune-hunter sues not for so much metal, but a heart. I know 'tis yours, sir; take her and, in due time, my wealth; for I thank fortune, my ships still sail the seas.

Che. (*Looking from window.*) Eh! there's Master Sables, followed by the doctor, crossing the yard.

Bez. Ha! I've used him in my plot to teach him the gravity due to his days; though I doubt not, the lesson will something chafe him. Come, let us meet the storm and brave it.

Pros. Oh, Mabellah! how have the changes of this brief day taught me thy worth—thy goodness!

Bez. Even so; it was my wish to teach you the true knowledge of each other—'twas for that you here encountered: for well I knew that they who in the hours of gaiety and freedom seem mere birds of idle song, touched by adversity, become

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THE

PAINTER OF GHENT.

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CHARACTERS.

RODERICK.	SERVANT.
ICHABOD.	
FATHER FRANCIS.	EUPHEMIA.
ANSON.	CHILD.

SCENE—*Ghent.*

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THE

PAINTER OF GHENT.

SCENE—*An apartment massively furnished, in the Gothic style. On the walls the portrait of a female, with three portraits of children. On one side a richly-carved and ornamented cabinet.*

Discovered, RODERICK *seated, intently gazing on the picture of a child before him.* ICHABOD *and* ANSON *waiting apart.*

Ichabod. (*To* ANSON.) I may not tarry longer.—

Anson. A little—yet a little.

Ichab. I say, I have affairs that call me (*Approaching* RODERICK.) Good sir—

Ans. Hush! thou dost not know the peril. (*Aside—watching* RODERICK.) Oh, I fear him! Would he had never seen it!

Ichab. (*To* RODERICK.) Good, noble gentleman—

Ans. Peace! See you not his face?

Ichab. In brightest day, sir, I could hardly see the grave my staff might touch. His face!

Ans. (*Aside—observing* RODERICK.) So it looked when—oh, that smile! Alas, I fear him!

Ichab. But I can count the hours—half hours—minutes; at seventy-five 'tis time to count them—and, again, sir, I may no longer stay.

Ans. Wait. (*Approaching* RODERICK.) Old Ichabod, the Jew—the picture trader,—

Roderick. Right—very right.

Ans. He would sell the picture, and be gone.

Roder. (*Turning to him.*) Ichabod—fie, Anson! a chair.

[ANSON *places a chair, and* ICHABOD *sits near* RODERICK, ANSON *stands apart.*

Ichab. It is the picture, sir—is't not?

Roder. It is.

Ichab. A noble thing, sir—a wondrous thing! I have not

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eyes to see it now—but it is here, sir, here—a piece of very light.

Roder. You knew the painter?

Ichab. I was his first patron. He would have perished—starved with his wife and children, but that I spared him something, something for—

Roder. The noble things—the wondrous things he wrought!

Ichab. He had made an unthrifty match with a poor, pretty face, and his rich father—so I gathered—thrust him penniless abroad.

Roder. And then, it seems, he turned accomplishment to bread—to daily food for wife and babes? You were a patron—he became a drudge.

Ichab. By Aaron's beard, I swear I was his first friend; took all he did, sir, good and bad—aye, risked my sure gold upon a nameless hand.

Roder. And found he no other help? Were you alone in this good work?

Ichab. In time, other dealers flocked about him—would have bought him from me; but then, sir, I raised and raised my price, and he was faithful to an early friend. That picture—'twas I think the last he sold me,—it was the last—the price I paid confirms it; aye, fifty golden pieces.

Roder. Thy memory is worn—think again—not fifty?

Ichab. Sure I am 'twas fifty—sure, as if now I chinked the pieces in my hand.

Roder. How old art thou, Ichabod?

Ichab. Seventy-five, a month, and odd three days.

Roder. And every day narrows the little, little space between thee and the grave—and every night thou layest thy dry bones in thy bed, thou well mayest fear that ere the next sun set, a churchyard clay shall hold them! Thy beard is white—thy limbs unstrung—thy blood jellied—and thine eyeballs quenched. Old man, death is aiming at thee.

Ichab. Amen! I await the stroke.

Roder. What! with a lie upon thy lip?—

Ichab. Master!—

Roder. A trading lie, when worms are waiting thee? Ichabod, believe it—an old man's face, though seamed and stained with years, should beam with coming glory!

Ichab. What now, sir?—what need of talk like this? Abraham receive me!—I—we spake of the picture, and—

Roder. And I said thy memory wandered. Five—not fifty pieces—was the price you paid. Nay, I knew the painter.

Ichab. Knew Roderick?—

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Roder. Know his history—know his every work.

Ichab. Is he alive?

Roder. Aye.

Ichab. I can make him rich. You know his pictures?—there was one—a baby Hercules, grasping a wolf,—

Roder. He painted it within the shadow of a gaol.

Ichab. 'Twas but last week its new inheritor—a wealthy friend of art—came to my house to seek the painter out. He would employ him on—

Roder. What!

Ans. (*Aside to* ICHABOD. Peace! For God's great love, be silent!)

Roder. (*Solemnly.*) The time is past—he cannot work for man!

Ans. (*Aside:* Out on the Jew! the fit returns.)

Ichab. Noble sir, you said he was alive. I speak of—

Ans. (*Interposing.*) The picture you would sell his honour. (*To* RODERICK.) Ichabod would fix the bargain, and depart. Now, Jew—now.

Ichab. Well, sir, well—perhaps my memory was false; I could have sworn 'twas fifty, but if you know the painter—

Roder. Hear, then judge. 'Tis eighteen years since Roderick for the first time lingered at your door. Pictures of excelling power—wonders of the art were there, tempting the rudest passenger to pause, and feed upon their beauty. And Roderick stood and gazed, but not on them. A child, whose eye, and cheek, and waving hair, and fawn-like grace, and happy, glorious looks made dim the painted life about it—a child—

Ichab. 'Twas Reuben!—I could not speak before—'twas my own bright boy—the child of my grey hairs—the dove, sent, as I thought, to murmur peace to my old age!

Roder. The infant, loudly laughing, ran towards Roderick; he had taken it in his arms,—

Ichab. When I appeared. 'Tis all before me now. He praised my boy; (who did not, who had the eyes and ears of man?) he praised him—talked of the art—and next day showed me a picture of his own. I bought it—bade him bring me more; that before you—the figure is his own child—was the last. Oh, Reuben! Reuben! I recollect—'twas five pieces.

Roder. With drowning eyes, and burning hand—for death again was at my hearth—I laboured at my half-completed work.

Ichab. Thou!

Roder. I tell you, for one whole day I wrestled with my heart; and that picture—the semblance of my last living babe—I sold to buy a coffin for the dead.

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Ichab. And thou didst not tell me this?

Roder. Thou didst know my wretchedness.

Ichab. But hadst thou told—

Roder. Told! When swelling affluence doth blink its horny eyes, think you the pride of poverty can find a tongue? I laid my little one in yonder earth, and turned my back upon your city.

Ichab. And I was then a father! And still I chaffered—still, with the hardness of old Egypt, tasked you for scanty bread. Well, I have been—am scourged for it. Reuben!—my murdered Reuben!

Roder. Murdered!

Ichab. Oh, sir! he grew like a young palm, and my heart waxed great within me, and I felt not age when I did look upon him. He was a healing jewel to mine eye—a staff of cedar in my hand—a fountain at my foot.

Roder. And slain?

Ichab. In the street. Thrice a day I kneel upon the place, and what I pray there may not be told to man!

Roder. Killed!

Ichab. It was a day of state—the streets were thronged. A neighbour's child, one of our people—a gentle, timid girl—went with my son. He pressed to place her near the sight, when a young noble smote him to the earth. My boy leapt up—I thank God!—returned the blow. The ruffian drew upon my child—cried "dog of a Jew!"—and pierced his guileless heart.

Roder. Old man—old man!

Ichab. The sword is here while I do speak of it.

Roder. The murderer?

Ichab. The murderer? He was noble. He paid some fine, they say—had leave to travel. Reuben was a Jew.

Roder. Almighty heaven!

Ichab. Had one of our tribe trod on a noble's hound—plucked a feather from a noble's hawk, he had been striped, and prisoned, mutilated, marred. The meek, professing Christian, breaks God's own phial, and journies forth in peace.

Roder. Not in peace—not in peace.

Ichab. They brought my boy to my dark house. I saw the wound—I have seen nothing clearly since.

Roder. Sweet boy!

Ichab. Ha! thou dost remember him?

Roder. Did I not paint—

Ichab. That picture! In an evil hour, won by his prayers, I gave it to his grandfather. When Reuben was lost to me, I travelled far to repossess it. I found it—the house and all it

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held had passed to alien hands—I found it, flung with lumber in a reeking vault. Vermin—pitiless as men—had preyed upon it: the face—that lovely face—was half destroyed; even his sweet image was denied me! But thou art sent to aid—wilt hear me?

Roder. Speak.

Ichab. Think it the prayer of an old, weak, blind, childish man—think it, but do not refuse it. His face! thou'lt say, I cannot see it. True, but I shall know 'tis there—can lay my hand upon it. Reuben's face—thou knowest it—oh, it is still within thy brain, before thine eye—thou couldst not, if thou wouldst, forget it! Wilt thou—wilt thou restore it?

Roder. No!

Ans. (*Aside to* ICHABOD: Peace! thou'lt bring back madness.)

Roder. (*Solemnly.*) Ask it no more—this hand is not mine own. It is a thing, rescued from earthly purposes—a thing, by holy use, made sacred unto heaven! Hearken—I will tell thee.

Ans. Him! an unbeliever?

Roder. When the earth shone in its new brightness—when this still beautiful earth—one wide altar, bore its odorous first-fruits to the sky—when yellow time had mild angelic looks—and human hearts were soft, and man smiled greetingly to man—came there not from the far world mighty things, whose might was beauty?

Ichab. Aye, sir—aye.

Roder. For then were men as younger brothers of the angels, and won their high communion. Jew, thou dost believe this?

Ichab. Aye—upon my soul.

Roder. The world changed with its dwellers. Time grew haggard—man lived earthwards. Yet came there highest spirits—in mercy did they come—to strengthen and to warn. It is thy faith?

Ichab. My faith.

Roder. The world we dwell in—what have man's low passions made it? What hath his pride, lust, folly, crime, built up?—a gaol, with walls as high as Babel! And here we pine, the oppressing and the oppressed; and here, some trace a shadowy pageant on the floor—some scratch a name within the flint—some, witless, laugh a hollow life away—some, silent, die—and some go raving mad!

Ans. (*Aside:* Alas!)

Roder. Speak! Is't not so?

Ans. (*Aside to* ICHABOD: Thou hast stirred up this—do not cross him.)

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Ichab. It is.

Roder. And yet, in this cold, clouded time, self-captives as we are—still toiling to make fast our prison—we cannot bar good out. I say, where not a mote can enter, angels come to man!

Ichab. Good sir—

Roder. If moved by mortal agony—if touched by human tears. They come—looking felicity—speaking manna!

Ichab. Aye—aye.

Roder. Then hearken—for thy faith hath won my story. Hearken; and while I speak, forget the earth; think all things worldly passing from thee—thyself on the eternal waters laving the bright future. Hearken!

Ans. Master! the father—heaven be thanked!—the father Francis! He comes—you will remember—as you bade him. (*Aside, hurrying* ICHABOD: (Come, Jew—follow me.

Roder. I had forgotten—it is the day. I had forgotten. [*Exit.*

Ans. Thy hand, Ichabod,—

Enter FATHER FRANCIS.

Francis. Peace be with ye! Where is thy master?

Ans. Within. Oh, father! thou art come in happy time to soothe him.

Francis. So ill!

Ans. The Jew hath torn the wound afresh; again he raves.

Francis. Seek him—urge that I attend. A word with the Jew. (*Exit* ANSON.) What hast thou uttered to this soul-sick man—what thy business here?

Ichab. Lawful traffic—honest dealing.

Francis. Thou wouldst profit by calamity, old man; with thy grave open at thy foot, wouldst overreach a wild, disordered mind?

Ichab. Ha! Thou hast the old charity, meek monk.

Francis. Hence! know we not thy race?—thy sordid subtlety towards Christian men?

Ichab. If we *are* subtle, we are that which ye have made us. Our race! ye treat us as we were a knot of loathsome worms, and then marvel if we sometimes crawl.

Francis. Oh! I know the Hebrew heart; our sorrows are its food—our joys its poison.

Ichab. Father Francis, — two days ago thou didst beg of me—

Francis. Beg! Jew!

Ichab. Well—well. There are, thou saidst, prisoners—Christian prisoners, in the city fort. Young bones crooked with the

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weight of chains, rivetted by Christian hands. The state demands a crushing ransom: thou and thy brethren—I praise the zeal—would gather monies for their freedom. Thou didst ask my money.

Francis. And when I told thee of the withering husband, the miserable father—spake of the worn and heart-sick wife—thou didst hear my tale—thou, an old man, didst hear with ears of stone. More: when I told thee of the child—the captive's child—the poor innocent, barred from its father's neck,—dost thou remember?—

Ichab. Yes.

Francis. Thy face beamed with a horrid light—thine eyes trembled beneath their lids—thy pale lips grinned apart, and thy shaking hand did grasp thy breast, as though a snake were moving there.

Ichab. I do remember.

Francis. Thou didst strike thy staff upon the earth, and, crowing devilish laughter, turn away.

Ichab. I do repent it.—I do repent it. The prisoners? Well, they shall have my mite.

Francis. Sayest thou?

Ichab. The prisoner's child? Say it were the child, the only darling child of a mere Jew? At how much money should its life be rated?—

Francis. Its life?—

Ichab. I'll tell thee—twenty golden crowns. Nay, it is—it was—the price. Thou art new to our city, but, trust me, it was the price. Believe me, it hath been paid — I know, it hath been paid.

Francis. Tears! old man!

Ichab. Hush! Thou shalt have forty golden crowns.

Francis. Forty?

Ichab. Peace: I feel a strange happiness that I can say it. Enough.—I came not here to over-reach, I came to sell mine own. Seest thou a picture—'tis there, I think—the portrait of a child?

[*Pointing with his staff to picture on the floor.*

Francis. Aye.

Ichab. It is the child of Roderick.

Francis. Of Roderick?

Ichab. Years ago I bought it of him; now he would repurchase it.

Francis. Aye?

Ichab. 'Tis a girl—is't not—a child, some five years old, sitting on a bank? In her right hand, she has an opening rose; three buds, plucked from its stalk, lie on the earth. To the left, is a

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dish of fruit; grapes, pines, oranges, pomegranates. And look, thou'lt see amongst it, the scales of a coiled adder; it lies in shadow, but near the black cluster, its eyes are burning, and its fang is out.

Francis. The painter had some meaning in those fallen buds—that mortal reptile?

Ichab. I thought so—asked him if he had not. He shivered from the crown to the sole, but made no answer. On a turned vine-leaf, there is a drop of water worth a diamond.

Francis. Thou hast well painted the picture. Images dwell in thy mind in their first beauty.

Ichab. I am thankful—aye; and therefore is the blind man not all dark, but with the eyes of his soul can see bright things. Farewell. I'll send the crowns by the boy who leads me. He stays below. What, Isaac!—

Enter ANSON.

Francis. Hast thou told thy master?

Ans. Alas! I know his mood—he may not now be spoken with. Pale as marble—his motionless eye dreaming on the empty air, he sits as in a trance. (FRANCIS *is about to go.*) Yet, go not, father; he may recover soon, and much he needs thy help.

Francis. I'll tarry, and yet I know not—

(*Enter* ISAAC—*he is about to lead off* ICHABOD.)

Stay. (*Seats himself at table, and writes.*) Ichabod, in thy way home, thou dost pass the convent of the Carmelites—nay, 'tis not fifty paces from this house,—let thy boy leave this letter for the abbess.

Ichab. Have the holy sisterhood pincers at the gate to take it from his hand?—spices and vinegar to make sweet the missive touched by a jew?

Francis. They'll give thee thanks, and pray thy heart be turned.

Ans. (*Looking at* ISAAC.) A face, frank—open—honest—and,—

Ichab. And yet—a Jew, (FRANCIS *puts letter in* ICHABOD'S *hand.*) He shall take the letter, father. [*Exit, led off by* ISAAC.

Francis. Hast thou long dwelt with this estranged man?

Ans. Six years—no more; and then his malady was new upon him.

Francis. And 'tis not now so raging?

Ans. But, I fear me, deeper fixed. Then, indeed, I have known

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him stand before yon cabinet for three whole days, three weary nights—now muttering with clenched hands and streaming lids, and now, breathless and gazing with unmoved eyes; food, and sleep, and all familiar things forgot.

Francis. Yet on all other subjects he is calm, nay wise?

Ans. Thou shalt hear him talk a lecture—speak opinions full of rarest knowledge—dissect men's motives with a teacher's skill. Then breathe a doubt of his wild tale,—say, his daughter is not dead,—and he will start away as though he looked upon a leper.

Francis. I bless the choice that led me to a cloister. Children are earthly idols, that hold us from the stars.

Ans. That is her picture.

Francis. And in that gentle face what promise of kind thoughts—of sweet companionship for middle age—of softest ministerings for dear grey hairs! Yet, 'tis that smiling, radiant thing; hath stung a father into madness. Again, I bless the heavens for my hood!

Ans. The sight of it but feeds—hark!—did he not call?

Francis. I heard nothing; but go—observe him. A lone woman with her child hath travelled to our city, to beg her husband's freedom. The holy Carmelites have lodged, and comforted her. I have bid the Abbess send her hither.

Ans. For what purpose?

Francis. She shall beg the helping purse of Roderick. Nay, I am earnest in the thought. [*Exit* ANSON.

Enter Servant.

Servant. A poor woman from the Carmelites.

Francis. Admit her. (*Exit* Servant.) And this new poison, though warily, must be denied him.

[*Throws a cloak over the picture, entirely concealing it.*

Enter EUPHEMIA, *veiled, and meanly drest.*

Euphemia. Save ye, holy father!

Francis. Cheer thee, my child—take comfort. Our prayers have touched men's hearts—even the hearts of unbelievers. The ransom—a ransom won by Christian charity from softened foes, will soon be paid; thy husband will be free. I tell thee this,—and still thou wearest a haggard face—a look of sharper misery. Where hast thou been?

Euphem. Where an old grief hath risen with armed strength—where old faces, with frowns they never had before, have looked

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upon me—where old voices, old, but changed, have spoken to me.

Francis. What fearful place is this?

Euphem. A sister's grave.

Francis. I thought thee a stranger to our city?

Euphem. I was a child—would they had laid me with the dead!—when I was taken hence.

Francis. And thou hast sought thy sister's monument?

Euphem. There is no thing to mark the spot—no tablet, stone, or wooden cross—and yet I knew it.

Francis. Indeed?

Euphem. Oh, father! the children of the poor have curious memories. Death comes not to their home a stately summoner, veiling its hideousness with robes and plumes; but stands, and strikes upon the poor man's hearth, a naked, foul, and cruel thing.

Francis. But ever brings a blessing to the house prepared.

Euphem. My father begged some earth to hide the jewel of his home. I was a child,—an infant; but this morning, standing there, I saw it all again. Saw my sweet sister, my dear playmate, laid in the deep clay—heard the white-haired priest murmur a prayer—beheld my father, swelling with mute agony,—

Francis. Daughter!

Euphem. Saw him quiver like a reed, when the earth fell. He caught me to his breast, and his tears gushed upon my face, and so he stood, until the earth rose to his foot. Then, mastering his tears, he turned away—but, oh! that leaden look of desolation.

Francis. Be calm! Thou wilt be heard—

Euphem. I had forgotten. I come in duty to thy bidding.

Francis. I have a patient here—a sick, disordered mind. I want thy healing help.

Euphem. Mine?

Francis. Press thy suit upon him—beg his bounty for the prisoners,—tell him all thy miseries. For if I can sometimes wean his soul to fix itself on stranger woes, I shall not yet despair of perfect health. Thou wilt assist me?

Euphem. With my weak skill? Oh, yes!

Francis. And thy child, too—nay, I have not seen it.

Euphem. 'Tis with the sisters—a mother's blessing on them!

Francis. Its innocence might haply soften him.

Euphem. From what proceeds his malady?

Francis. A daughter lost.

Euphem. Dead? Happy daughter!

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Francis. Not dead—but hence the fantasy that preys upon his brain, and on that theme alone, shuts out all reason. His child deserted him; and his mind, shaken by former griefs, hath sunk beneath a daughter's cruelty.

Euphem. Made mad by his own child?

Francis. Alas!

Euphem. And thou wouldst have me comfort him?

Francis. Aye.

Euphem. Thou wouldst not place a serpent at a sick man's pillow? Thou wouldst not have *me* speak to him?

Francis. Daughter!

Euphem. Were he warped and withered—harsh to the ear—loathsome to the eye—my guilt would give to him the form, the face, the gracious looks and tender voice of my own father. Comfort him! I should fall a felon at his foot.

Francis. Woman!

Euphem. Oh, curse me not, although thy curse is but a word! The curse within me is a living thing.

Francis. Is it so? Thou too hast left a parent? Say, was he tyrannous or—

Euphem. No—no—no! The kindest father—the noblest man—the truest gentleman that ever breathed.

Francis. And thou couldst leave him? I guess the madness,—love?

Euphem. We feign him a child—a smiling, blissful child. Oh, it was some fiend that tore my heart out, and made vile my nature! But no—I did not think to quit him. I wrote and wrote, and begged forgiveness—he replied not. I flew to find him—he had wandered, none knew whither. The war began—I had not means to seek him. My husband was made prisoner by my countrymen, and I became a begging alien in my native land.

Francis. Thy sin was great—thy penance must be answerable. Hear me! I charge thee, address thyself to my poor patient, tend—

Euphem. It is impossible—I cannot.

Francis. See—he comes. Stay!

Euphem. Father, set me any task of suffering—scourge my spirit as thou wilt—and I will do, endure, it. This, I cannot do.

Francis. (*Detaining her.*) Look; his head is turned upon us, though he sees us not. Mark his white face—his glazing look of vacancy—mark—

Euphem. Merciful God! it is my father! [*Falling at his feet.*

Francis. (*Raising her.*) Thy father!

Euphem. Oh, thou knewest this!

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Francis. By my bright saint, no! Oh, happy providence! Stay!

Euphem. Not couldst thou turn this house to gold, and give it me, to stay. My father!

Francis. I command thee—stay!

Euphem. Inflict what pain thou wilt, I will be tractable. There is no penance—none that can shake me. The iron girdle and the knotted rope—fasting and barefoot pilgrimage—ashes on my head—fire in my path—my black crime writ and hung about my neck,—doom me to aught of these or all,—I will not murmur. Nay, bid me give my hand—the wedded hand that slew a father's mind,—to some wild beast, and I will do it. But *here*, I cannot—will not—dare not, stay!

Francis. And yet thou hast hoped—hast sought to meet him?

Euphem. Not mad—not mad! Oh, worst of parricides, to kill a father's mind!

Francis. Woman—hold, and hear me! Thou hast struck thy father to the earth,—and wilt not help to raise him? Thou hast run a dagger in his flesh, wilt let the wound bleed on? Thou hast driven a thorn in his poor brain,—wilt thou not pluck it out?

Euphem. Mercy! mercy!

Francis. By thy mother's grave, thy father's misery—by thy captive husband, fettered in a dungeon,—by his child that hath lain in thy bosom,—by the last throb of thy heart, when this world shall swim away, and light or darkness be thy lot,—

Euphem. Mercy!

Francis. I do command thee,—child of sin and sorrow—stay!

Euphem. (*Falling on her knees.*) I am thine—do with me what thou wilt.

Francis. He comes!

Euphem. Not yet—not yet.

Francis. Your pity, kindest saints!—your balm for these sad wounds!

Euphem. (*Clinging to him.*) His foot! It treads upon my heart!

Francis. See! his face hath changed; and now, serenely smiling, he gives direction to his servant. Look!

Euphem. I can look at death; but not at that, next heaven most terrible, an injured father's face.

Francis. Be calm—be hopeful. Stand apart—I will prepare him.

Euphem. Father, I cannot—I feel, I cannot. Oh, say, what hope—what aid can come of this? (*Despairingly.*) What can *I* do?

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Francis. Pray!

[*He commandingly motions her to retire. She obeys, and is seen at intervals from behind the cabinet.*

Enter RODERICK.

Roderick. Save ye, father!

Francis. Save ye, my son! I have expected you.

Roder. Father, I have been sitting with the dead; and though men are wont to pay them little courtesy, it is not my custom. Poor things! we heap upon our own flesh heavy, dismal earth,—and pass a year, a month, a week, and we think of it no more, than if some mole had heaved the hillock up. I ask you,—is this kind, is this gentle, to the dead?

Francis. And yet we best may think of death by thinking of our lives. Thou hast promised me thy history?

Roder. A poor, torn leaf—blotted with tears.

Francis. I have read many such. May I claim thy promise?

Roder. My life! It is written in the epitaphs of all I loved. Well, I will approach the grave, and read it thee. [*They sit.*

Francis. (*Aside:* And so to lead him to his daughter.)

Roder. Fortune gave to me a happy youth. The sordidness of life, its miserable wants, degrading by their clinging littleness, I never knew them until I was a husband and a father. Thou art a monk, and though thou hast seen much mortal misery, thou dost not know that pang. Thou canst not feel—thou canst not comprehend the agony of that dread hour, when wife and children, things that were given us to garland life, are turned by want into a crown of thorns.

Francis. Aye—thou hadst children?

Roder. Four. Dead!

Francis. All?

Roder. All.

Euphem. (*Unable to repress herself.*) Father!

[*She shrinks behind the cabinet.*

Francis. Didst thou hear nothing?

Roder. Yes—but be not thou afraid. It is one of them.

Francis. Thou dost remember it?

Roder. It is one of the sweet voices that do sometimes talk to me.

Francis. Alas!

Roder. In the free air they come like singing-birds about me. And sometimes at night I hear them near my face. Last night, they all were with me. And there was one arm, one soft, round,

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little arm—it was Euphemia's—close about my neck, close about my neck.

Euphem. (*Aside:* Parricide!)

Francis. And died they young?

Roder. Aye—look there. (*Pointing to pictures on the wall.*) My father's enmity ceased with his life—he left me fortune. For the last five years I have travelled to possess them—at any cost have made them mine.

Francis. The pictures of thy children?

Roder. Of my lost babes. In my poverty, their painted beauties bought them bread.

Francis. And they are gone before—and wait to welcome thee. Happy father!

Roder. Happy! But thou art a monk.

Francis. They were deemed too fair, too fragile for a long pilgrimage, and heaven called them home again.

Roder. Mark that: my first-born, a child, nursing a lamb. Oh, her eye was as a star for thought to dwell upon! her voice,—'twould almost touch the hearer into tears. She died!

Francis. The second?—

Roder. Dear Adolph! His mother's face—his mother's spirit. A frank, noble, tender, loving thing. He died!

Francis. The next?—

Roder. Oh, father! is that a face for worms? And oh! the light of happiness that shone upon it! The squirrel at her foot was not more blithe—had not more graceful life in its quick limbs. She died.

Francis. The fourth?—

Roder. Why, Anson!—

(*Enter* ANSON.)

Who dared do that? Speak! Who dared to hang that pall between his father and his child?

Francis. (*Taking cloak from picture.*) I will remove it.

Roder. Euphemia—oh, Euphemia!

Francis. (*Having whispered to* ANSON.) Haste; delay not. (*Exit* ANSON.) The fourth?—

Roder. She died!

Euphem. (*Aside:* Oh, the happiness of death!)

Roder. (*Pointing to picture on the wall.*) Look there—a Hebe pouring nectar. 'Twas her mother.

Euphem. Mother! [*Kneeling to it.*

Roder. (*Hearing her.*) Hush! 'tis gone. It was painted ere he was my wife—in after years was taken from me by the law.

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I have journeyed many a league—but 'tis mine again: both mine—the mother, and the child the mother died for.

Francis. Thou hast had thy sorrows—still, have hope.

Roder. I have—the shadow is before me; and now it smiles and points into a grave. Where should hope lead me, if not to join all these? I fear it is a sin—pray tell me—I cannot help it—do not chide; but I fear I love that child something more than I love the others.

Euphem. (*Aside:* Have mercy, heaven!)

Francis. Art very sure she's dead?

Roder. Would she have left her father else? Oh, it would be horrible to doubt—though long I doubted.

Francis. Thou didst?

Roder. Then—then I was mad; none knew it, but I was mad. And then I prayed, and I was comforted.

Francis. Yea—always!

Roder. The things I saw—the sounds I heard! Creatures with bloody beaks and cold blue eyes, and yet men, tearing each other! And ghastly shows—and holidays of death—and masks where men vizored their faces from living beasts, snarled and rent like foxes, wolves, and then would smile again and speak like men. But children—children!

Francis. Good son!

Roder. Oh, they were always beautiful! I met a troop of the sweet innocents. I looked for mine, and found Euphemia. I hugged her to my breast; she had some wild flowers in her hand, and, smiling, laid them at my heart, when they became—

Euphem. Father!

[*She rushes down, and falls in the arms of* FRANCIS, *who hides her from* RODERICK.

Roder. Father!

Francis. No, she called on me. (*Aside to her:* Not yet—'tis not the time.) She is a poor petitioner for mercy; her husband lies a captive in the fort. I bade her come to thee in aid of ransom, though not thus suddenly.

Roder. Where is thy father?

Francis. Speak not of him—it is her malady to think him dead, though still he lives.

Roder. Strange fantasy! Heaven help poor human wits!

Francis. She hath been a wayward, disobedient child—but she repents in bitterness.

Roder. But doth she pray? Hearken! I will discover to you what prayer hath done for me. Who's there?

Francis. I hear no one.

Roder. Thou dost look for some one. Nay—I see thou dost.

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Francis. A child—they say, the lovely child of—

Roder. Peace! The beauty of children is a terror—a fearful loveliness. No children!

Francis. 'Tis only an infant,—a—

Roder. Only? Dost thou not know their 'subtlety? Hast thou not read, or known the jugglers of the world exposed by babes?—by children, who silent sit at the fireside, and after many years tell how the trick was done—show what poor mountebanks the world has gaped at? No children.

Francis. Thou hadst a story?

Roder. Mark the worth of prayer. When Euphemia lay on her death-bed—

Euphem. (*Aside:* Hopeless agony!)

Roder. I prayed she might be spared me. It might not be. Day after day death's shadow grew upon her. And then I prayed for grace—that I might take some note, some record of the sweet features fading—fading from me. I prayed and prayed. At length, a spirit stood before me! Look not with the cold eye of doubt—I say, a winged messenger from God! My prayer was heard—the time allowed. For two days I toiled at my task—thou shalt see the picture: it is there. My nature was sublimed, ennobled for the work,—for two days I felt no human want. My task was done—Euphemia went to heaven!

[EUPHEMIA'S Child *runs on—followed by* ANSON.

Child. Mother!—

Roder. And see! they bring her back to me!—(*Seizing the child in his arms*)—again a child—again a happy, lovely, spotless child!

Francis. (*Aside to* EUPHEMIA: The very image as 'tis painted there!)

Roder. I see what 'tis we find in heaven. We lose the soil, the taint, the guilt of later days, and are made for ever joyous little children. Why dost thou scowl upon me? Is it not my child—mine? Nay, thou shalt see the holy work—compare—

[*Advances towards cabinet, when* EUPHEMIA, *throwing off her veil, stands before him.*

Euphem. Father!

Roder. Mighty God! Can the grave do that?

Euphem. Father, dost thou not know me?

Roder. Yes. Thou art Euphemia—thou art that we laid in the grave—and that—(*Pointing to* Child)—that is thy bright soul!

[*Falls in the arms of* FRANCIS, *and is supported to the couch.*

Euphem. Father! Thou wilt not cast me off?

Roder. Poor spectre—no! There—(*Embracing her*)—closer—

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lay thy head nearer. Thou shalt not leave me; no—thou shalt not leave me—we will go together.

Euphem. He dies!

Francis. No.

Roder. My brain seemed but now to leave me.

Francis. Ha! his eye brightens with a new-born health.

Roder. Euphemia—

Euphem. He knows me still.

Roder. I have been sick.—Oh, pray for me!

Francis. Hush!

Roder. Euphemia!— [*Falls into a sleep.*

Euphem. He sleeps!

Francis. Prayer must do the rest.

[*They kneel about the couch of* RODERICK.

END OF "THE PAINTER OF GHENT."

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BLACK-EY'D SUSAN;

OR,

"ALL IN THE DOWNS."

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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Admiral	MR. GOUGH.
Captain Crosstree	MR. FORESTER.
Lieutenant Pike	MR. HICKS.
Lieutenant	MR. ALMAR.
William	MR. T. P. COOKE.
Doggrass	MR. DIBDIN PITT
Raker	MR. WARWICK.
Hatchet	MR. YARDLY.
Gnatbrain	MR. BUCKSTONE
Jacob Twig	MR. ROGERS.
Quid	MR. LEE.
Blue Peter	MR. WILLIAMSON.
Seaweed	MR. ASHBURY.
Yarn	MR. DOWSING.
Ploughshare	MR. WEBB.
Black-ey'd Susan	MISS SCOTT.
Dolly Mayflower	MRS. VALE.

Officers, Midshipmen, Sailors, &c. &c

This Drama was represented for the first time at the Surrey Theatre.

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BLACK-EY'D SUSAN;

OR,

"ALL IN THE DOWNS."

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A View of the Country in the vicinity of Deal.*

Enter DOGGRASS *and* GNATBRAIN.

Dog. Tut! if you're inclined to preach, here is a mile-stone—I'll leave you in its company.

Gnat. Ay, it's all very well—very well;—but you have broken poor Susan's heart,—and as for William—

Dog. What of him?

Gnat. The sharks of him, for what you care. Did'nt you make him turn sailor, and leave his young wife, the little, delicate, black-eyed Susan, that pretty piece of soft-speaking womanhood, your niece?—Now, say, hav'n't you qualms? On a winter's night, now, when the snow is drifting at your door, what do you do?

Dog. Shut it.

Gnat. What, when in your bed, you turn upon one side at the thunder?

Dog. Turn round on the other. Will you go on with your catechism?

Gnat. No, I'd rather go and talk to the echoes. A fair day to you, master Doggrass!—If your conscience——

Dog. Conscience!—phoo! my conscience sleeps well enough.

Gnat. Sleeps! don't wake it—it might alarm you.

Dog. One word with you; no more of your advice.—I go about

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like a surly bull, and you a gadfly buzzing around me. From this moment, throw off the part of counsellor.

Gnat. But, don't you see?—

Dog. Don't you see these trees growing about us?

Gnat. Very well.

Dog. If a cudgel were cut from them for every knave who busies himself in the business of others—don't you think it would mightily open the prospect?

Gnat. Perhaps it might. And don't you think, that if every hard-hearted, selfish rascal that destroys the happiness of others, were strung up to the boughs before they were cut for cudgels, it would, instead of opening the prospect, mightily darken it?

Dog. I have given you warning—take heed! take heed! and with this counsel, I give you a good-day. [*Exit.*

Gnat. Ay, it's the only thing good you can give; and that, only good, because it's not your own. The rascal has no more heart than a bagpipe; one could sooner make Dover cliffs dance a reel to a penny whistle, than move him with words of pity or distress.—No matter: let the old dog bark, his teeth will not last for ever—and I yet hope to see the day, when poor black-eyed Susan, and the jovial sailor, William, may defy the surly cur that has divided them. [*Exit.*

Scene II.—*The Town of Deal.*

Enter Raker *and* Hatchet.

Raker. A plague on him!—if I thought he meant us foul play,—

Hat. Not he—'twas a mistake.

Raker. Ay, a mistake that nearly threw us into the hands of the Philistines. But I know why you have ever a good word for this same Doggrass.

Hat. Know! you know as much as the weathercock that answers every wind, yet cannot tell the point from which it blows. And what do you know?

Raker. I know that Mrs. Susan, Doggrass's niece, has two black eyes.

Hat. Hm! your knowledge proves that, though a fool, you are not yet blind.

Raker. Civil words, master Hatchet.

Hat. What! be you as dumb as the figure-head of the Starling; as soft and as yielding as teazed oakum—let my little finger be your helm, and see you answer it. Who am I?

Raker. Tom Hatchet, the smuggler of Deal, captain of the Redbreast, and trading partner with old Doggrass.

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Hat. Thank'ee. Now I'll tell you who you are—Bill Raker, first mate of the Redbreast, as great a rogue as ever died at the fore-yard, and consequently——

Raker. The best person to go on your errands.

Hat. Just so; see you do them well. Now, bear up, whilst I pour a broadside of intelligence into you. I'm going to be married.

Raker. You generally are at every port you put into.

Hat. Belay your jokes. To whom do you think?—you can't guess?

Raker. No. It isn't to the last port-admiral's widow? Perhaps to big Betsy, the bumboat woman?

Hat. No, you albatross; to Susan—black-eyed Susan.

Raker. Steady there—steady!—I'm no younker. The lass is married already.

Hat. (*Significantly.*) Ay, she *had* a husband.

Raker. What!—why no?

Hat. How blows the wind now—what do you stare at? He's dead.

Raker. William dead! Then there's not so fine, so noble, so taut-rigged a fellow in his majesty's navy.—Poor lad! poor lad!

Hat. Turning whimperer?

Raker. Why not?—such news would make a mermaid cry in the middle of her singing.

Hat. Avast with your salt water!—William is not dead. What think you now?

Raker. That there is one more brave fellow in the world, and one more liar.

Hat. Ha!—

Raker. Slack your fore-sheet, Captain Hatchet! If you must spin such galley yarns, let it be to the marines, or the landlady of the Ship; but see that you don't again bring water into an old sailor's eyes, and laugh at him for hoisting an answering pendant to signals of distress. You marry Susan!—now belay, belay the joke.

Hat. Listen to my story;—it shall be short, short as a marlin-spike. I must marry Susan;—she knows not you—you must swear that you were her husband's shipmate—that you saw him drowned. Susan now lives with old Dame Hatley; she has no other home: and if she refuse, Doggrass will seize on the old woman's goods, for long arrears of rent, and turn Susan adrift; then the girl has no chance left but to marry. Is it not a good scheme?

Raker. Had the devil been purser, he could not have made a better.

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Hat. I'm now going to Doggrass, to see further about it; meantime, do you think of the part you are to act, and I'll think how I can best reward you. [*Exit.*

Rater. I must certainly look a scoundrel. There must be an invitation in my face to all sorts of wickedness; else Captain Hatchet could never have offered such dirty work to an old sailor. I must look a villain, and that's the truth. Well, there is no help for an ugly countenance; but if my face be ill-favoured, I'll take care to keep my heart of the right colour—like the Dolphin Tap, if I hang out a badly painted sign-post. I'll see and keep good cheer within. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Dame Hatley's Cottage.—Susan is heard without, singing a verse of Black-ey'd Susan.*

Enter SUSAN.

Susan. Twelve long and tedious months are passed, and no tidings of William. Shame upon the unkind hearts that parted us — that sent my dear husband to dare the perils of the ocean, and made me a pining, miserable creature. Oh! the pangs, the dreadful pangs that tear the sailor's wife, as, wakeful on her tear-wet pillow, she lists and trembles at the roaring sea.

Enter GNATBRAIN.

Gnat. There she is like a caged nightingale, singing her heart out at her prison bars—for this cottage is little better than a gaol to her. Susan!

Susan. Gnatbrain!

Gnat. In faith, Susan, if sorrow makes such sweet music, may I never turn skylark, but always remain a goose.

Susan. Have you seen my uncle?

Gnat. Oh, yes!

Susan. Will he show any kindness?

Gnat. I cannot tell; you may have flowers from an aloe-tree if you wait a hundred years.

Susan. He has threatened to distress the good dame.

Gnat. Ay, for the rent. Oh, Susan, I would I were your landlord. I should think myself well paid if you would allow me every quarter-day to put my ear to the key-hole, and listen to one of your prettiest ditties. Why, for such payment, were I your landlord, I'd find you in board, washing, and lodging, and the use of a gig on Sundays. I wish I—but la! what's the use of my wishing? I'm nobody but a half-gardener, half-waterman—a kind of alli-

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gator, that gets his breakfast from the shore, and his dinner from the sea—a—

Susan. Oh, begone! I see Mr. Doggrass;—if he find you here—

Gnat. He must not; here's a cupboard—I'm afraid there's plenty of room in it.

Susan. No, no, I would not for the world—there is no occasion —meet him.

Gnat. Not I, for quiet's sake. We never meet, but like fire and gunpowder there is an explosion. This will do. [*Goes into closet.*

Enter DOGGRASS.

Dog. Now Susan; you know my business—I say, you know my business? I come for money.

Susan. I have none, sir.

Dog. A pretty answer, truly. Are people to let their houses to beggars?

Susan. Beggars. Sir, I am your brother's orphan child.

Dog. I am sorry for it. I wish he was alive to pay for you. And where is your husband?

Susan. Do *you* ask where he is? I am poor, sir—poor and unprotected—do not, as you have children of your own—do not insult me. [*Weeps.*

Dog. Ay, this it is to let houses to women.—If the tax-gatherer could be paid with crying, why nobody would roar more lustily than myself: let a man ask for his rent, and you pull out your pocket-handkerchief. Where's Dame Hatley?

Susan. In the next room—ill, very ill.

Dog. An excuse to avoid me; she shall not. [*Going.*

Susan. You will not enter?

Dog. Who shall stop me?

Susan. If heaven give me power—I! Uncle, the old woman is sick—I fear, dangerously. Her spirit, weakened by late misfortune, flickers, like a dying light—your sudden appearance might make all dark. Uncle—*landlord!*—would you have murder on your soul?

Dog. Murder?

Susan. Yes; though such may not be the common word: hearts are daily crushed, spirits broken—whilst he who slays destroys in safety.

Dog. Can Dame Hatley pay me the money?

Susan. No.

Dog. Then she shall to prison.

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Susan. She will die there.

Dog. Well!

Susan. Would you make the old woman close her eyes in a gaol?

Dog. I have no time to hear sentiment. Mrs. Hatley has no money—you have none? Well, though she doesn't merit lenity of me, I'll not be harsh with her.

Susan. I thought you could not.

Dog. I'll take whatever may be in the house, and will put up with the rest of the loss.

Enter DOLLY MAYFLOWER.

Dolly. So, Mr. Doggrass!—this is how you behave to unfortunate folks—coming and selling them up, and turning them out. Is this your feeling for the poor?

Dog. Feeling! I pay the rates. What business have you here? Go to your spinning.

Dolly. Spinning! if it were to spin a certain wicked old man a halter, I'd never work faster. Ugh! I always thought you very ugly, but now you look hideous.

Susan. Peace, good Dolly.

Dolly. Peace! oh, you are too quiet—too gentle. Take example by me; I only wish he'd come to sell me up, that's all (DOGGRASS *goes to door*). Oh, I know who you are looking for—your man, Jacob Twig; he hops after you on your dirty work, like a tomtit after a jackdaw—I saw him leering in at the door. I wish my dear Gnatbrain was here. Oh, Susan, I wish he was here; he's one of the best, most constant of lovers—he'd befriend you for my sake.

Dog. (*goes to door.*) Jacob!

(*Enter* JACOB TWIG.)

You know your business.

Jacob. What here, master?—what at old Dame Hatley's?

Dolly. To be sure, good Jacob;—If your master had a tree, and but one squirrel lived in it, he'd take its nuts, sooner than allow it lodging gratis.

Susan. Uncle, have compassion—wait but another week—a day!

Dog. Not an hour—a minute. Jacob do your duty.—Now, begin; put down every thing you see in the cottage.

Jacob. Master, hadn't you better wait a little? Perhaps the Dame can find friends. (*Doggrass is imperative.*) Well, here goes: I'll first begin with the cupboard.

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Susan. (*anxiously.*) No, let me entreat you, do not.—Come this way—if you are determined.

Dog. Eh! why that way?—why not with the cupboard! I suspect.—

Jacob. And now, so do I.

Dolly. You suspect! I dare say—suspicion is all your brain can manage! What should you suspect—a thing that never had a thought deeper than a mug of ale? You suspect Susan! why, we shall have the crows suspecting the lilies!

Jacob. You say so, do you? Now I'll show you my consequence. I'll put everything down, master, and begin with the cupboard. Ah! it's fast; I'll have it open—and I'll put the first thing down.—

[*Pulls open the door of the cupboard, when* GNATBRAIN *knocks* JACOB *prostrate with a rolling pin.*

Gnat. No, I'll put the first thing down!

Dolly. Gnatbrain! Oh, Susan, Susan!

Dog. Oh, oh! we shall have the crows suspecting the lilies! Pretty flower! how it hangs its head! Go on with your duty, Jacob; put down everything in the house.

Gnat. Do, Jacob; and begin with "one broken head"—then, write one stony-hearted landlord—one young woman innocent—ditto, jealous;—one man tolerably honest—and one somewhat damaged.

Jacob. I'll have you up before justices—you have broken my crown.

Gnat. Broken your crown! Jacob, Jacob! it was cracked before.

Jacob. How do you know that?

Gnat. By the ring of it, Jacob, by the ring; I never heard such a bit of Brummagem in my life.

Dog. Well, Susan, it is sometimes convenient for a husband to be at sea?

Susan. Sir, scorn has no words, contempt no voice to speak my loathing of your insinuations. Take, sir, all that is here; satisfy your avarice—but dare not indulge your malice at the cost of one, who has now nothing left her in her misery but the sweet consciousness of virtue. [*Exit.*

Dog. The way with all women when they are found out—is it not, Mrs. Dolly?

Dolly. I can't tell, sir!—I never was found out.

Dog. Ay, you are lucky.

Dolly. Yes—we don't meet often. But as for you, Mr. Gnatbrain——

Gnat. Now no insinuations—I wish I could remember what

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Susan said about virtue: it would apply to my case admirably. Nothing like a sentiment to stop a charge—one may apply it to a bleeding reputation as barbers do cobwebs to a wound.

Dog. Jacob, do you stay here—see that nothing of the least value leaves the house.

Gnat. In that case, Jacob, you may let your master go out.

Dog. Some day, my friend, I shall be a match for you. [*Exit.*

Gnat. Perhaps so, but one of us must change greatly to make us pairs. Jacob, I never look upon your little carcase, but it reminds me of a pocket edition of the Newgate Calendar—a neat Old Bailey duodecimo! You are a most villainous looking rascal—an epitome of noted highwaymen.

Jacob. What!

Gnat. True as the light. You have a most Tyburn-like physiognomy!—There's Turpin in the curl of your upper lip—Jack Shepherd in the under one—your nose is Jerry Abershaw himself—Duval and Barrington are in your eyes—and as for your chin, why Sixteen-string Jack lives again in it. (*Affecting to see what is passing outside.*) Eh! well done—excellent! there's all the neighbours getting the furniture out of the garden-window.

Jacob. Is there? it's against the law! I'm his majesty's officer, and I'll be among them in a whistle.

[*Runs out at door*—GNATBRAIN *instantly bolts it.*

Gnat. A bailiff, like a snow-storm, is always best on the outside. Now Dolly, sweet Dolly Mayflower.

Dolly. Don't talk to me. The cupboard, sir—the cupboard.

Gnat. Hear my defence. I had not the least idea that you would have looked there, or the cupboard is the very last place I should have gone into.

Dolly. It's no matter! There's Mr. James Rattlin, boatswain's mate of the Bellerophon——

Gnat. What! you wouldn't marry a sailor?

Dolly. And why not?

Gnat. Your natural timidity wouldn't allow you.

Dolly. My timidity?

Gnat. Yes; you wouldn't like to be left alone o' nights. Your husband would be at sea six months out of the twelve; there would be a wintry prospect for you.

Dolly. But he would be at home the other six—and there's summer, sir.

Gnat. True, but when you can have summer all the year round, don't you think it more to your advantage?

Dolly. No—for if it always shone, we should never really enjoy fine weather.

Gnat. Oh, my dear, when we are married, we'll get up a

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thunder-storm or two, depend upon it. But come, Dolly; your heart is too good—your head too clear, to nourish idle suspicion—let us go and see poor Susan; there is real calamity enough in our every-day paths, we need not add to it by our own caprice. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*A View of the Country about Deal.*

Enter HATCHET.

Hatchet. Doggrass has made the seizure by this time. Now I'll step in, pay the money, and thus buy the gratitude of Susan, before I tell her the story of her husband's death.

(*Enter* JACOB, *running.*)

Bring up, there, my young skiff! Whither bound?

Jacob. I'm in a hurry.

Hat. Bring up, I say, or I'll spoil your bowsprit.

[*Lifting his cudgel.*

Jacob. Do you know who I am?

Hat. No; who are you, my young flying-fish?

Jacob. I'm a bailiff—ar'n't you frightened? I serve Mr. Doggrass.

Hat. The very craft I was sailing after. You have been to Susan's—Black-ey'd Susan's, as she's called?

Jacob. How do you know that?

Hat. You have made a seizure there?

Jacob. Right.

Hat. Have secured every thing?

Jacob. Wrong. I had made as pretty a piece of business of it as any of my craft—a very pretty stroke of handiwork,—but somehow or the other——

Hat. You frighten me! Nobody paid the money, I hope?

Jacob. Oh, don't be alarmed at that,—no: but somehow or the other, quite by a mistake, when I thought I was in possession, I found myself on the wrong side of the house. Ah, here comes Susan.

(*Enter* SUSAN.)

Ar'n't you ashamed of yourself, Mrs. Susan, to make one to cozen so innocent a little bailiff as myself—ar'n't you ashamed of yourself?

Hat. (*to Jacob.*) Stand o' one side! What! in trouble, my pretty Susan? Have the land sharks got aboard the cottage? Come, cheer up.

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Susan. Do you indeed pity me? This is kind—and from a stranger, unexpected.

Hat. Not such a stranger as you may think.

Susan. Not?

Hat. No, I knew your husband—sailed with him.

Susan. You did?—oh, tell me every thing.

Hat. All in good time—(*To* JACOB.) What do you want here—sticking like a barnacle to a ship's copper?

Jacob. What! Here comes my master, he'll tell you what I want. I'll leave you with him, he'll answer all questions. [*Exit.*

Enter DOGGRASS.

Dog. So, ma'am—you must show contempt of a king's officer—put a servant of the law out of doors!

Hat. Steady, there! None of your overhauling—what do you want with the young woman?

Dog. What's that to you?

Susan. Oh, pray don't quarrel on my account—do not, I entreat you.

Hat. (*Aside:* I'll swagger a little.) Quarrel, my dear, I'd fight yard-arm to yard-arm for you—go on a boarding party, cut out, row under a battery, or fight in a rocket-boat. Anything for the pretty black-ey'd Susan.

Dog. Well, as you'll do all this, perhaps you'll pay the money she owes?

Hat. That will I, though it were the last shot in my locker.

Susan. No, no, there is no occasion!—I would not have it for the world.

Dog. You wouldn't? I would. Don't be afraid; he'll talk, but he'll be long ere he pays twelve pounds seventeen and sixpence for you, black ey'd and pretty as you are.

Hat. See how little you know of a sailor. There's thirteen pounds. (*Gives money.*) I'm not much of an accountant; but it strikes me that that will pay your little bill, and just leave a dirty two-and-sixpence for young Jib-boom, the bailiff.

Susan. Oh, my good, kind friend—this generosity—my thanks, my prayers!—

Hat. Not a word, not a word—good-day.

Susan. Yet, do not leave me! You said you knew my husband—had a tale to tell of him.

Hat. Not now; to-morrow. If I have done anything to oblige you, let me ask the delay. Besides, then I will bring one with me who can tell you more of William than I can myself;

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meantime, farewell. (*Aside:* She's softened; a woman is like tar, only melt her, and she will take what form you please. I've bought her heart with the chink, and to-morrow will secure it.) [*Exit.*

Susan. Wait till to-morrow! Alas! there is no remedy but patience; and, spite of myself, I feel forebodings which I know 'tis weakness to indulge.

Dog. I suppose, Mrs. Susan, as the case at present stands, neither you nor the old dame will now think of leaving the cottage?

Susan. Indeed, landlord, we shall.

Dog. Landlord! why not uncle? It is a much better word.

Susan. It might have been, but your unkindness has taught me to forget it.

Dog. Now, hear reason! (*She turns from him.*) Well, to be sure, a plain-spoken man can't expect it from one of your sex, so I'll leave you. You'll think again about the cottage? It has a pretty situation, and as for the rent, why, as one may say, it's a nothing. (*Aside:* Now to my jolly boys the smugglers; they carouse to-night at their haunt, and will be expecting me.) [*Exit.*

Susan. Cruel man! Oh, William! when, when will you return to your almost heart-broken Susan? Winds blow prosperously; be tranquil, seas, and bring my husband to my longing eyes. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.—*The Cave of the Smugglers. It is supposed to lead to a subterraneous passage, opening on the sea-shore.—Casks on each side of the stage—tables, cans, &c.*

Enter LIEUTENANT PIKE, *disguised as a French Officer.*

Pike. The smugglers are caught—we'll roast them in their own trap. The fools! I have gulled them with a story as long as a maintop-bowline. They think me a French officer, escaped from a prison-ship, and have stowed me away here until an opportunity shall serve to take me over to France. Eh? who have we here? [*Retires.*

Enter RAKER.

Raker. Captain Hatchet promises well; it is but a lie—ay, but such a one! No, I'm determined not to join such a plot, yet I'll seem to do so, too. Mounseer!

Pike. Who dat?

Raker. A friend.

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Pike. Ma foi! dis place is de veritable enfer—'tis de diable.

Raker. Yes, you are not used to it; it isn't so pleasant as Paris, I dare say. Well, you have paid us decently for the job, still I don't think it altogether right, that having been taken fighting against us, we should aid in your escape—the captain says so, however.

Enter HATCHET—Smugglers *come in from different parts, seat themselves at table and prepare for drinking.*

Hat. What's that about the captain?

Raker. Only talking a bit with the Mounseer.

Hat. Well, Frenchman, about midnight the craft gets under weigh, and to-morrow you may sup in France.

Pike. Avec beaucoup de plaisir; ce sera bien agreeable. (*Aside:* Are all the gang here, I wonder.)

Raker. Hallo! what's that? why the Mounseer is speaking English!

Hat. English! poor fellow! not he — he hasn't sense enough, like you or me.

Enter Smugglers *from back of Cave.*

Smug. A prize! a prize!

All. Where?

Smug. At the mouth of the creek. It is an excise-cutter's boat —her crew are somewhere about. Let us first scuttle the craft and then—

Pike. Villains!

Hat. Ha! treachery! (*To* PIKE.) You are no Frenchman?

All. Down with him! down with him!

Pike. Fifty on one!—nay, then, let's make a bout of it—Skylark's crew ahoy!

[*A huzza is given,* Sailors *rise up from behind various parts of the scene from the butts, and present their pistols at the* Smugglers, *who, after a brief struggle, yield.*

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A View of the Downs; the Fleet at anchor.*

Enter DOGGRASS *and* JACOB TWIG.

Jacob. Well, master, I think they have made a lucky escape.

Doggrass. They have, for this time; but they had to fight for it. Had it not been for a sudden reinforcement, Hatchet, Raker, and all the jolly boys, would have been taken; it would have spoilt the roaring trade of Deal.

Jacob. Yes, and your trade as innkeeper, and chief encourager of the smugglers.

Dog. No such ill-luck in the stars, I trust: and look what a fleet has dropped anchor during the night! I must run to Hatchet, and see how he fares with Susan—if she stands out, she's less of the woman than I take her to be. [*Exit.*

Jacob. After all, I don't much like this trade of bailiff, I've a great mind to give it up, go back to my native Dover again, and turn ploughman. Eh! the boats are putting off from the ships. Deal will be crowded again; there will be no getting a sweetheart for these six months.

Enter WILLIAM, SEAWEED, BLUE PETER, *and* Sailors.

William. Huzza! huzza! my noble fellows, my heart jumps like a dolphin—my head turns round like a capstan—I feel as I were driving before the gale of pleasure for the haven of joy.

Seaweed. But I say, William, there's nobody here to meet us.

Wil. Why, no! that is, you see, because we dropped anchor afore the poor things had turned out of their hammocks. Ah! if my Susan knew who was here, she'd soon lash and carry, roused up by the whistle of that young boatswain's-mate, Cupid, piping in her heart. Hallo! what craft is this? Cutter, ahoy! —what ship?

Jacob. (*Taking off his hat.*) My name is Jacob Twig.

Wil. You needn't bring-to under bare poles—cover your truck and up with your answering pendant. Come! clear your signal halyards, and hoist away.—What service?

Jacob. I'm in the law.

Wil. Umph! belongs to the rocket-boats. May my pockets be scuttled, if I didn't think so! His Beelzebub's ship, the Law! She's neither privateer, bombship, nor letter-of-mark;

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she's built of green timber, manned with loplolly-boys and marines; provisioned with mouldy biscuit and bilge water, and fires nothing but red hot shot: there's no grappling with, or boarding her: she always sails best in a storm, and founders in fair weather. I'd sooner be sent adrift in the North Sea, in a butter-cask, with a 'bacco-box for my store room, than sail in that devil's craft, the Law. My young grampus, I should like to have the mast-heading of you in a stiff north-wester!

Sea. Avast there, messmate! Don't rake the cock-boat fore and aft.

Wil. Why, yes, I know it's throwing away powder and shot to sink cockle-shells with thirty-two pounders. But wasn't it the lawyers that turned me and Susan out of our stowage? Why I'd as soon have met one of Mother Carey's chickens as—eh? (*looking out*) there's a fleet bearing down!

Peter. A fleet!—ay, and as smart as a seventy-four on the king's birth-day.

Wil. A little more to port, messmate. There's my Susan! Now pipe all hands for a royal salute! There she is, schooner-rigged. I'd swear to her canvas from a whole fleet. Now she makes more sail!—outs with her studding-sail booms—mounts her royals, moon-rakers, and sky-scrapers; now she lies to it!—now! now!—eh! may I be put on six-water grog for a lubber——

Peter. What's the matter?

Wil. 'Tisn't she—'tisn't my craft.

Enter Rustics, *men and women, and* PLOUGHSHARE, *who welcome all the* Sailors. *Every one, except* WILLIAM, *is met by a female. He looks anxiously at every one.—Music.—All go off except* PLOUGHSHARE *and* WILLIAM.

Wil. What! and am I left alone on the doctor's list, whilst all the crew are engaging? I know I look as lubberly as a Chinese junk under a jury-mast. I'm afraid to throw out a signal—my heart knocks against my timbers like a jolly-boat, in a breeze, alongside a seventy-four. I feel as if half of me was wintering in the Baltic, and the other half stationed at Jamaica. It's no use; I must ask for despatches. Damn it, there can be no black seal to them! (*To* PLOUGHSHARE.) Messmate!

Ploughshare. Now, friend? [*Comes down.*

Wil. Give us your grappling-iron! Mayhap you don't know me?

Plough. No.

Wil. Well, that's hard to a sailor come to his native place.

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We have ploughed many an acre together on farmer Sparrow's ground.

Plough. What—William!—William that married Susan!

Wil. Avast there! Hang it—that name spoken by another, has brought the salt water up: I can feel one tear standing in either eye, like a marine at each gangway. But come, let's send them below. (*Wipes his eyes.*) Now, don't pay away your line till I pipe. I have been three years at sea; all that time, I have heard but once from Susan: she has been to me a main-stay in all weathers. I have been piped up, roused from my hammock, dreaming of her, for the cold, black middle watch—I have walked the deck, the surf beating in my face, but Susan was at my side, and I did not feel it. I have been reefing on the yard, in cold and darkness, when I could hardly see the hand of my next messmate—but Susan's eyes were on me, and there was light: I have heard the boatswain pipe to quarters; a voice in my heart, whispered Susan, and I strode like a lion.—The first broadside was given,—shipmates, whose words were hardly off their lips, lay torn and mangled about me—their groans were in my ears, and their blood hot on my face—I whispered, "Susan!" It was a word that seemed to turn the balls aside, and keep me safe. When land was cried from the mast-head, I seized the glass—my shipmates saw the cliffs of England—I, I could see but Susan! I leap upon the beach; my shipmates find hands to grasp and lips to press—I find not Susan's!

Plough. Believe me——

Wil. Avast there! if you must hoist the black flag,—gently. Is she yet in commission?—does she live?

Plough. She does.

Wil. Thank heaven!—I'll go to church next Sunday, and you shall have such a can of grog—eh! but your figure-head changes like a dying dolphin! She lives, but perhaps hove down in the port of sickness:—No! what then, eh—avast! avast! not dead—not sick,—yet—why there's a galley-fire lighted up in my heart—there's not an R put to her name?

Plough. What do you mean?

Wil. Mean! grape and cannister! She's not run—not shown false colours?

Plough. No, no.

Wil. I deserve a round dozen for the question. Damn it, none of your small arms, but open all your ports and give fire.

Plough. Susan is well—is constant; but has been made to feel that poverty is too often punished for crime.

Wil. What, short of ammunition to keep off the land-sharks? But her uncle?

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Plough. He has treated her most unkindly.

Wil. I see it! I'll overhaul him—I'll bring him on his beam-ends. Heave a head, shipmate!—Now for my dear Susan, and no quarter for her uncle.

[*Exeunt* WILLIAM *and* PLOUGHSHARE.

Enter CAPTAIN CROSSTREE.

Crosstree. In faith, that's the prettiest little vessel I ever saw in a long station. I threw out signals to her, but she wouldn't answer. Here comes the fellow that passed me whilst I was talking to her.

Enter GNATBRAIN.

Crosstree. Shipmate, there is a dollar for you.

Gnatbrain. Truly, sir, I would we had been messmates, you might then have made it ten shillings.

Cross. You passed me a few minutes since, when I was in company with a petticoat.

Gnat. Ay; it's no use, captain.—She's a tight little craft, and as faithful to all that is good, as your ship to her helm.

Cross. What is her name?—who is she?

Gnat. We simply call her Susan—black-ey'd Susan; she is the wife of a sailor.

Cross. Ah! what, fond of the blue jackets?

Gnat. Yes, so fond of the jacket, that she'll never look at your long coat—good day, captain. [*Exit.*

Cross. The wife of a sailor! wife of a common seaman! why she's fit for an admiral. I know it is wrong, but I will again see her—and come what may, I must and will have her. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Interior of* SUSAN'S *Cottage.*

Enter WILLIAM, *at door.*

William. Well, here I am at last! I've come fifteen knots an hour, yet I felt as if I were driving astern all the time. So, this is poor Susan's berth—not aboard—out on liberty, and not come to the beach?—Eh! that's she; ha! and with two strange-rigged craft in convoy—I'll tack a bit, and—damn it, if there's foul play—chain-shot and bar-shot! I'll rake 'em fore and aft. [*retires.*

Enter HATCHET, SUSAN, *and* RAKER, *at door.*

William. (*Aside:* What! hanging out signals of distress?)

Susan. Oh, these are heavy tidings, indeed.

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Hatchet. Don't take on so, pretty Susan! If William is dead, there are husbands enough for so pretty a face as yours.

Wil. Dead! may I never splice the mainbrace, if that swab don't want to get into my hammock. (HATCHET *approaches nearer to* SUSAN.) Now, he's rowing alongside her with muffled oars, to cut her cable!—I'll tomahawk his rigging for him!

Susan. But is there no hope?

Hat. Hope! none. I tell you, Susan, this honest fellow was William's messmate; he saw him go down, you didn't rightly hear him when he first told the story—tell it again, Tom. (RAKER *sullenly indicates his unwillingness.*) Poor fellow, he was William's friend, and the story hurts him.—I'll tell it you.—You see the ship had got upon the rocks, and it came on to blow great guns; her timbers opened, then she broke her back—all her masts were over board, and orders were given to take to the boats.—William was in the jolly-boat:—well, she hadn't got the length of a boarding-pike from the wreck, when she shipped a sea, and down she went.—William and twelve other brave fellows were in the water;—this shipmate here, threw out a rope; it was too late, William sunk and was never seen more. His shipmate turned round, and saw——(*During this speech,* RAKER *has moved into the corner of the stage, his back to* HATCHET, *as if unwilling to hear the story.*—WILLIAM, *by the conclusion of the speech has placed himself between* HATCHET *and* SUSAN.) Damnation!

Susan. (*Shrieking and throwing herself into* WILLIAM'S *arms.*) William!

Wil. Damn it, I'm running over at the scuppers, or you lubbers I'd been aboard of you before this. What! hang out false signals to the petticoat—may you both have the yellow flag over you, and go up in the smoke of the forecastle-chaser! Bring to a minute, and I'll be yard-arm and yard-arm with you. What, Susan, Susan! see, you swabs, how you've brought the white into her pretty figure-head (*puts* SUSAN *aside—draws his cutlass.*) Now, then, I'll make junk of one of you.

Susan. William! William! for heaven's sake!

Wil. Just one little bout, Susan, to see how I'll make small biscuit of 'em. You won't fight? Then take *that* to the pay-master and ask him for the change.

[*Strikes* HATCHET *with the flat part of his cutlass.*

Hat. Struck! then, here's one of us for old Davy!

[*Runs at* WILLIAM, *who is struck down on one knee, his cutlass having fallen from his hand; at this moment the two windows and door are thrown open, and* LIEUTENANT PIKE *with* Marines *and* Sailors, *are seen with pointed muskets.* PIKE *in centre.*

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Pike. Smugglers, surrender! or you have not a moment's life.

[HATCHET *and* RAKER, *startled by the appearance of* PIKE'S *party, recoil—the* Marines *march on, and take them into custody.*

Wil. Smugglers! I thought they were not men-of-war's men—true blue never piloted a woman on a quicksand.

Pike. We dogged you here, though you gave us the slip last night. Come, my lads; as you have cheated the king long enough, you shall now serve him—the fleet wants hands, and you shall aboard.

Wil. If they are drafted aboard of us, all I wish is, that I was boatswain's mate for their sake. (*Exeunt all but* WILLIAM *and* SUSAN *at door.*) Now, Susan (*embraces her*), may I be lashed here until death gives the last whistle.

Susan. Oh, William! I thought we should never meet again.

Wil. Not meet! why we shall never part again. The captain has promised to write to the Admiralty for my discharge; I saved his life in the Basque Roads. But I say, Sue, why wer'n't you on the beach?

Susan. I knew not of your arrival.

Wil. Why a sailor's wife, Susan, ought to know her husband's craft from a whole fleet, if he sailed in a washing-tub. But how is this, Sue? how is it? Poverty aboard! and then your uncle——

(*Enter* DOGGRASS.)

The very griffin I was talking of. Now, what are you staring at? What are you opening your mouth for like the main-hold of a seventy-four? I should like to send you to sea in a leaky gun-boat, and keep you at the pumps for a six months' cruize.

Doggrass. What! William!

Wil. Avast, there! Don't think to come under my lee in that fashion. Ar'n't you a neat gorgon of an uncle now, to cut the painter of a pretty pinnace like this, and send her drifting down the tide of poverty, without ballast, provisions, or compass? May you live a life of banyan days, and be put six upon four for't.

Dog. But you mistake, William.

Wil. No palaver; tell it to the marines. What tacking and double tacking? come to what you want to say at once;—if you want to get into the top go up the futtock-shrouds like a man—don't creep through lubber's hole.—What have you got to say?

Dog. Don't! you have put my heart into my mouth.

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Wil. Have I? I couldn't put a blacker morsel there.—Just come alongside here. (DOGGRASS *goes up to him.*) I am not much of a scholar, and don't understand fine words: your heart is as hard as a ring-bolt—to coil it up at once, you are a damned rascal. If you come here after your friends, you'll find 'em in the cock-pit of one of the fleet: you have missed the rattlins this time, but brought yourself up by the shrouds. Now, take my advice, strike your false colours, or I wouldn't give a dead marine for the chance of your neck.

Dog. Well, we shall meet again. (*Aside:* As Hatchet's taken, I must look to myself.) [*Exit.*

Wil. That fellow would sit still at his grog, at the cry of "a man overboard!" Oh, Susan, when I look at your eyes, you put me in mind of a frigate, with marines firing from the tops. Come along, Sue. First to fire a salute to old Dame Hatley, then away to my shipmates. To-day we'll pitch care overboard, without putting a buoy over him—call for the fiddles—start the rum cask—tipple the grog—and pipe all hands to mischief.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A View near Deal—Public-house.*

PETER, SEAWEED, GNATBRAIN, DOLLY, Sailors, Rustics, *men and women, discovered drinking.*

Seaweed. Belay that galley-yarn, Peter; belay! Though you have got among the landsmen, don't pay out so much cable.

Gnatbrain. Oh, let him go on—he lies like a purser on a reckoning day.

Sea. No, no, we'll have no more of it. Where's William, I wonder? He promised to meet us. I suppose he's with his Susan now.

Peter. And where can he be better, do you think? But suppose, just to pass the time away, I give you the song that was made by Tom Splinter, upon William's parting with Susan in the Downs.

All. Ay, the song—song!

Sea. Come, pipe up, my boy. Poor Tom Splinter! He was cut in half by a bar-shot from the Frenchman; well, every shot's commissioned. The song, the song!

Peter. Here goes; but I know I can't sing it now.

Sea. Can't sing! Bless you (*to* Rustics.) whenever we want to catch a mermaid, we only make him chaunt a stave, and we've twenty round the ship in the letting go of an anchor.

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*Song.**—BLUE PETER.

" All in the Downs the fleet was moor'd,
The streamers waving in the wind,
When black-ey'd Susan came aboard,
Oh! where shall I my true love find?
Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,
If my sweet William sails among your crew.

William, who high upon the yard,
Rock'd with the billow to and fro,
Soon as her well-known voice he heard
He sigh'd and cast his eyes below;
The cord slides swiftly through his glowing hands,
And (quick as light'ning) on the deck he stands.

So the sweet lark, high-pois'd in air,
Shuts close his pinions to his breast,
(If, chance, his mate's shrill call he hear,)
And drops at once into her nest.
The noblest captain in the British fleet,
Might envy William's lip those kisses sweet.

'O Susan, Susan, lovely dear,
My vows shall ever true remain;
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
We only part to meet again.
Change, as ye list, ye winds; my mind shall be
The faithful compass that still points to thee.

Believe not what the landmen say,
Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind:
They tell thee, sailors, when away,
In every port a mistress find.
Yes, yes, believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go.

If to fair India's coast we sail,
Thy eyes are seen in di'monds bright;
Thy breath is Afric's spicy gale,
Thy skin is ivory so white.
Thus ev'ry beauteous object that I view,
Wakes in my soul some charm of lovely Sue.

Though battle call me from thy arms,
Let not my pretty Susan mourn!
Though cannons roar, yet free from harms,
William shall to his dear return.
Love turns aside the balls that round me fly,
Lest precious tears should drop from Susan's eye.'

The boatswain gave the dreadful word,
The sails their swelling bosom spread,
No longer must she stay aboard:
They kiss'd, she sigh'd, he hung his head.
Her less'ning boat unwilling rows to land:
'Adieu!' she cries; and wav'd her lily hand."

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* Only the first two verses of "*Sweet William's Farewell to Black-ey'd Susan,*" are sung in representation.

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Peter. Eh! who have we here? Man the yards, my boys—here comes the captain.

Enter CAPTAIN CROSSTREE.

Crosstree. I am sorry, my fine fellows, to interrupt your festivities, but you must on board to-night.

All. To-night, your honour?

Cross. Yes; it is yet uncertain, that we may not be ordered to set sail to-morrow.

Peter. Set sail to-morrow! Why the Lords of the Admiralty will break the women's hearts, your honour.

Cross. Where is William?

Peter. He's with Susan, your honour; pretty black-ey'd Susan, as she is called.

Cross. With black-ey'd Susan! how is that?

Peter. How, your honour? Why they are spliced together for life.

Cross. Married! why I never knew of this?

Peter. No! Why, your honour I thought it was as well known as the union-jack. They were spliced before we went upon the last station. Not know it, your honour?—Many a time has the middle-watch sung the parting of William and Susan.

Cross. (*Aside:* Married! I had rather forfeited all chance of being an admiral.) Well, my lads, you hear my advice, so make the best of your time; for to-morrow you may be sailing for blue water again. [*Exit into inn.*

Peter. Them lords of the Admiralty know no more about the pleasures of liberty, plenty of grog, and dancing with the lasses, than I knows about 'stronomy.

Enter WILLIAM *and* SUSAN.

William. Here are my shipmates, Susan! Look at her, my hearties—I wouldn't give up the command of this craft, no, not to be made Lord High Admiral. What, honest Gnatbrain, Susan has told me about you; give us a grapple! (*takes out box.*) Here, take a bit from St. Domingo Billy.

Gnat. From what? [Sailors *gather round* WILLIAM.

Wil. From St. Domingo Billy. I see you are taken aback—steering in a fog; well, I'll just put out my toplights to direct your course.

Gnat. Now I'm a bit of a sailor, but none of your hard words.

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Wil. Hard words; No, I always speak good English:—you don't think I'm like Lieutenant Lavender, of the Swallow schooner.

Gnat. But about St. Domingo Billy?

Wil. It's lucky for you, that you've been good to Susan, or I shouldn't spin you these yarns. You see it was when the fleet was lying off St. Domingo in the West Indies—the crew liked new rum and dancing with the *niggers*. Well, the admiral (a good old fellow, and one as didn't like flogging), wouldn't give the men liberty: some of 'em, however, would swim ashore at night, and come aboard in the morning. Now, you see, to hinder this, the admiral and the captains put St. Domingo Billy on the ship's books, and served him out his mess every morning.

Gnat. Ay, ay: but who was St. Domingo Billy?

Wil. Why, a shark, as long as the captain's gig. This shark, or Billy, for that's what the sailors called him, used to swim round the fleet, and go from ship to ship, for his biscuit and raw junk, just like a Christian.

Gnat. Well, but your 'bacco-box, what about that?

Wil. Steady!—I'm coming to it. Well, one morning, about eight bells, there was a black bum-boat woman aboard, with a little piccaninny, not much longer than my hand. Well, she sat just in the gangway,—and there was Billy along-side, with his three decks of grinders, ready for what might come.—Well, afore you could say "about ship," the little black baby jumped out of its mother's grappling, and fell into Billy's jaws;—the black woman gave a shriek that would have split the boatswain's whistle! Tom Gunnell saw how the wind was; he was as fine a seaman as ever stept—(stood six feet two, and could sit upon his pigtail); well, he snatches up a knife, overboard he jumps, dives under Billy, and in a minute the sea was as red as a marine. All the crew hung like bees upon the shrouds, and when Tom came up all over blood, with the corpse of the baby, and the shark turned upon its side—my eyes! such a cheer—you might have heard it at Greenwich! We had 'em aboard, cut up Billy, and what do you think we found in him?—All the watches and 'bacco-boxes as had been lost for the last ten years—an admiral's cocked hat, and three pilot's telescopes. This is one of 'em! [*showing box.*

Gnat. What! of the telescopes?

Wil. No, of the boxes, you lubber.

Gnat. Well, friend William, that's a tolerable yarn.

Wil. True, true as the Nore Light. But come, my hearties, we are not by the galley-fire—let's have a dance.

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Peter. A dance! what should you say now if you were to see blue-peter flying at the fore?

Wil. Blue peter! Belay, there—we shan't touch cable these six weeks.

Peter. The captain blows from another point: eh! and here's Quid, the boatswain, with the crew of an admiral's barge after him.

Enter QUID, LIEUTENANT PIKE, *with* RAKER *and* HATCHET, *guarded by* Marines.

Quid. We'll see 'em in the bilboes, your honour.

Pike. That's right, for there's a whole nest of them up along the coast, and I know a rescue is meditated.

Quid. Rescue! They'd as soon get a twelvemonth's pay out of our purser. Now, lads, all hands on board.

Wil. On board, Master Quid! Why you are not in earnest?

Quid. Indeed, but I am. There's the lieutenant waiting on the beach for all the liberty-men.

Wil. The lieutenant?

Susan. Oh, William, must you leave me so early?

Wil. Why, duty, you know, Susan, must be obeyed. (*Aside:* Cruize about here a little while—I'll down to the lieutenant and ask leave 'till to-morrow.) Well, come along, shipmates; if so be that blue-peter must fly at the fore, why it's no use putting a black face on the matter.

[Sailors *go off with* Girls, RAKER, QUID, *and* HATCHET, *follow;* WILLIAM, *turning round and looking contemptuously at the two latter.*

Gnat. This it is, you see, pretty Susan, to be married to a sailor. Now, don't you think it would be much better if William had a little cot, with six feet square for the cultivation of potatoes, than the forecastle for the rearing of laurels?—to be obliged to leave you now!

Susan. Yes, but I trust he will be enabled to return. Nay, there are hopes that he will gain his discharge, and then with his prize-money—

Gnat. Ay, I see; go into the mercantile line—take a shop for marine-stores. But come along, Susan; the evening is closing in—I'll see you to your cottage.

Susan. I thank you, good Gnatbrain; but I would, for a time, be alone.

Gnat. Ah, I see; melancholy and fond of moonlight. Well,

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poor thing, it's not to be wondered at; I was melancholy once, but now, I contrive to keep a light heart, though it is stuck through by an arrow. [*Exit.*

Susan. I hope he will return—surely, his officer will not be so unkind as to refuse him.

Enter CAPTAIN CROSSTREE, *intoxicated, from inn.*

Crosstree. (*Singing.*) "Cease rude Boreas." — Confound that fellow's wine—or mischief on that little rogue's black eyes, for one or the other has made sad havoc here.

Susan. (*Aside:* The stranger officer that accosted me.)

Cross. Well, now for the boat. (*Sees* SUSAN.) May I never see salt water again, if this be not the very wench. My dear,—my love! Come here!

Susan. Intoxicated, too! I will avoid him. [*Going.*

Cross. (*Staying her.*) Stop! Why, what are you fluttering about? Don't you know, I've found out a secret?—ha, ha! I'm your husband's captain.

Susan. I am glad of it, sir.

Cross. Are you so? Come, that sounds well.

Susan. For I think you will give my husband leave of absence, or if that is impossible, allow me to go on board his ship.

Cross. Go on board,—that you shall! You shall go in the captain's gig—you shall live in the captain's cabin.

Susan. Sir!

Cross. Would it not be a shame for such a beautiful, black-ey'd tender little angel as yourself to visit between decks? Come, think of it—as for William he's a fine fellow, certainly, but you can forget him.

Susan. Sir,—let me go!

Cross. Forget him and live for me—by heavens I love you and must have you!

Susan. If you are a gentleman—if you are a sailor—you will not insult a defenceless woman.

Cross. My dear, I have visited too many sea-ports not to understand all this. I know I may be wrong, but passion hurries me—the wine fires me—your eyes dart lightning into me, and you shall be—

Susan. Let me go!—William, William!

Cross. Your cries are useless!

Susan. Monster!—William, William!

[WILLIAM *rushing in with a drawn cutlass.*

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Wil. Susan! and attacked by the buccaneers!—die.

[WILLIAM *strikes at the* Captain, *whose back is turned towards him;—he falls.*

Cross. I deserve my fate.

[WILLIAM *and the rest of the* Sailors, GNATBRAIN, &c. *who have re-entered*—"The Captain!"—WILLIAM *turns away horror-struck.*—SUSAN *falls on her knees, the* Sailors *bend over the* Captain.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Deal.*

Enter GNATBRAIN.

Gnatbrain. The court-martial is ordered;—the captains, with the admiral at their head, are assembling on board the ship. (*Gun heard without.*) And there goes the signal-gun for the commencement of the proceedings. Poor William!

Enter DOGGRASS.

Doggrass. Poor William! Ay if pity would save him, his neck would be insured. Didn't he attempt to kill his captain?

Gnat. True; he deserves hanging for that. You would have doubtless gone a different way to work. William cut down his officer in defence of his wife — now, you, like a good prudent man,—would have thrust your hands into your pockets, and looked on.

Dog. None of your nettles, sirrah. William!—hanging is too good for him.

Gnat. You know best who hanging is good for;—but I know this,—if all the rascals who, under the semblance of a smug respectability, sow the world with dissensions and deceit, were fitted with a halter, rope would double its price, and the executioner set up his carriage.

Dog. Have you any meaning in this?

Gnat. No—none: you can couple my meaning with your honesty.

Dog. When will your tongue change its pertness?

Gnat. When your heart changes its colour.

Dog. My heart! I've nothing to reproach myself with. I feel strong in—

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Gnat. Yes, you must be strong; there's no doubting that;—else, you'd never be able to carry that lump of marble in your bosom.—That's a load would try the strength of a porter.

Dog. I tell you what, my friend, I had some thoughts—

Gnat. I'll tell you what I had, only just now.—A dream.

Dog. A dream?

Gnat. Ay; I dreamt that a young lamb was set upon by a wolf; when, strange to say, a lion leapt upon it, and tore it piecemeal:—at this moment a band of men came up, and secured the noble brute.—They were about to kill the lion; their guns were pointed, their swords drawn,—when a thing, at first no bigger than my hand, appeared in the sky—it came closer, and I saw it was a huge vulture; it came wheeling round and round the lion, and appeared to anticipate the feast of blood—and with a red and glaring eye, and grasping talons, seemed to demand the carcase, ere the animal was dead.

Dog. And what, since you will talk, said you to the vulture?

Gnat. Nothing; but I looked at it—and with a loathing, left it. [*Exit, looking significantly at* DOGGRASS.

Dog. I shall never sleep quietly until I lay that rascal by the heels. Confusion take him! I am ashamed to say I am almost afraid of him.

(*Enter* JACOB TWIG.)

Now, Jacob, how fares Captain Crosstree?

Jacob. Better: it is thought he will recover.

Dog. Another disappointment! Yet, by the rules of the service, William must die. Here, Jacob, I've something for you to——

Jacob. I've something for you, sir. [*Gives him money.*

Dog. Why, what's this?

Jacob. Three guineas, two shillings, and sixpence-halfpenny. That's just what I've received of you since I've been in your employ.

Dog. Well, and what of that?

Jacob. I don't feel comfortable with it, sir—I'd thank you to take it.

Dog. Take it! Are you mad?

Jacob. No, sir—I have been; I have been wicked and I now think—and I wish you would think so too—that all wickedness is madness.

Dog. How is all this brought about?

Jacob. A short tale, sir;—it's all with the captain.

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Dog. The captain!

Jacob. Yes. I was in the public-house when the captain was brought in with that gash in his shoulder;—I stood beside his bed—it was steeped in blood;—the doctor shook his head—the parson came and prayed;—and when I looked on the captain's blue lips and pale face, I thought, what poor creatures we are—and then something whispered in my heart, "Jacob, thou hast been a mischief-making, wicked lad—and suppose, Jacob, thou wert, at a moment's notice, to take the captain's place?" I heard this—heard it as plain as my own voice—and my hair moved, and I felt as I'd been dipped in a river, and I fell, like a stone, on my knees.—When I got up again, I was quite another lad.

Dog. Ha, ha!

Jacob. That's not a laugh; don't deceive yourself; it sounds to my ears like the croak of a frog, or the hoot of an owl.

Dog. Fool!

Jacob. I ran as hard as I could run to farmer Arable; told him what a rascal I was, and begged he'd hire me.—He did, and gave me half-a-year's wages in advance, that I might return the money you had paid me—there it is.

Dog. Idiot! Take the money.

Jacob. Every coin of it is a cockatrice's egg—it can bring forth nought but mischief.

Dog. Take it—or I'll throw it into the sea.

Jacob. Don't; for coming from your hand, it will poison all the fishes.

Dog. You will be a fool, then?

Jacob. Yes; one of your fools, Master Doggrass—I will be honest. [*Exit.*

Dog. All falling from me;—no matter. I'll wait to see William disposed of—then, since the people here seem leagued against me, sell off my stock, and travel.—The postman brought this packet (*producing one*) to my house, directed to Captain Crosstree. What can it contain? No matter—it is a virtue on the right side to be over cautious; so, go you into my pocket, until William is settled for. (*Gun heard without.*) The court has opened—now to watch its progress. [*Exit.*

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SCENE II.—*The State Cabin of* WILLIAM'S *ship.*—*The Court Martial—three guns on each side of the Cabin.—The* Admiral *sits at the head of the table—an Union Jack flying over his chair; six* Captains *sit on each side of the table.* WILLIAM *is brought in by the* Master-at-Arms *and a* Marine Officer; *a* Marine *at each side, and one behind.—A* Midshipman *is in attendance.—Music.*

Admiral. Prisoner, as your ship is ordered for instant service, and it has been thought expedient that your shipmates should be witnesses of whatever punishment the court may award you, if found guilty of the crime wherewith you are charged,—it will be sufficient to receive the depositions of the witnesses, without calling for the attendance of Captain Crosstree, whom it is yet impossible to remove from shore. One of the witnesses, I am sorry to say, is your wife; out of mercy to your peculiar situation, we have not summoned her to attend.

William. Bless you, your honours, bless you! My wife, Susan, standing here before me, speaking words that might send me to the fore-yard!—it had been too much for an old sailor! I thank your honours. If I must work for the dead-reckoning, I wouldn't have it in sight of my wife.

Adm. Prisoner, you are charged with an attempt to slay Robert Crosstree, captain of his Majesty's navy, and your superior officer. Answer,—are you guilty or not guilty?

Wil. I want, your honour, to steer well between the questions. If it be asked, whether I wished to kill the captain?—I could, if I'd a mind to brag, show that I loved him—loved him next to my own Susan; all's one for that. I am not guilty of an attempt to kill the captain; but if it be guilt to strike in defence of a sailor's own sheet-anchor, his wife, why, I say guilty, your honour,—I say it, and think I've no cause to hang out the red at my fore.

Adm. You plead guilty?—Let me, as one of your judges, advise you to re-consider the plea. At least, take the chances which a hearing of your case may allow.

Wil. I leave that chance to your own hearts, your honours: if they have not a word for poor Will, why it is below the honesty of a sailor, to go upon the half-tack of a lawyer.

Adm. You will not retract the plea?

Wil. I'm fixed;—anchored to it, fore and aft, with chain-cable.

Adm. (*To* Marine Officer, *&c.*) Remove the prisoner. (WILLIAM *is removed as brought in.*) Gentlemen, nothing more remains for

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us than to consider the justice of our verdict. Although the case of the unfortunate man admits of many palliatives, still, for the upholding of a necessary discipline, any commiseration would afford a dangerous precedent, and, I fear, cannot be indulged.—Gentlemen, are you all determined in your verdict?—Guilty, or not guilty?—Guilty? (*After a pause, the* Captains *bow assent.*) It remains for me to pass the sentence of the law? (Captains *bow.*) Bring back the prisoner!

(*Enter* WILLIAM, *guarded as before.*)

Does no one of your shipmates attend to speak to your character? Have you no one?

Wil. No one, your honour? I didn't think to ask them—but let the word be passed, and may I never go aloft, if, from the boatswain to the black cook, there's one that could spin a yarn to condemn me.

Adm. Pass the word forward for witnesses.

[*Music.*—Midshipman *goes to cabin-door, and returns with* QUID.

What are you?

Quid. Boatswain, your honour?

Adm. What know you of the prisoner?

Quid. Know, your honour! The trimmest sailor as ever handled rope;—the first on his watch, the last to leave the deck;—one as never belonged to the after-guard; he has the cleanest top, and the whitest hammock; from reefing a maintop-sail to stowing a netting, give me taut Bill afore any able seaman in his Majesty's fleet.

Adm. But what know you of his moral character?

Quid. His moral character, your honour? Why, he plays upon the fiddle like an angel.

Adm. Are there any other witnesses? [*Exit* QUID.

Enter SEAWEED.

What do you know of the prisoner?

Sea. Nothing but good, your honour.

Adm. He was never known to disobey command?

Sea. Never but once, your honour:—and that was when I was upon the black list, he gave me half his grog.

Adm. What else do you know?

Sea. Why, this I know, your honour,—if William goes aloft, there's sartin promotion for him.

Adm. Have you nothing else to show?—did he never do any great, benevolent action?

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Sea. Yes, he twice saved the captain's life, and once ducked a Jew slopseller.

[Admiral *motions* Witness *to retire.*

Adm. Are there any more witnesses?

Wil. Your honours,—I feel as if I was in irons or seized to the grating, to stand here and listen, like the landlord's daughter of the Nelson, to nothing but yarns about sarvice and character. —My actions, your honours, are kept in the log-book aloft—if, when that's overhauled, I'm not found a trim seaman, why it's only throwing salt to the fishes to patter here.

Adm. (*To* Officers.) Gentlemen, are your opinions still unchanged? (Captains *bow assent.*) Prisoner, what have you to say in arrest of judgment? Now is your time to speak.

Wil. In a moment, your honours. I had been three years at sea, and had never looked upon or heard from my wife—as sweet a little craft as was ever launched.—I had come ashore and was as lively as a petrel in a storm. I found Susan,—that's my wife, your honours—and when we were as merry as a ship's crew on a pay-day, there comes an order to go on board—I left Susan, and went with the rest of the liberty-men to ask leave of the second lieutenant. I had not been gone the turning of an hour-glass, when I heard Susan giving signals of distress—I out with my cutlass, made all sail, and came up to my craft—I found her battling with a pirate—I never looked at his figure-head, never stopped—would any of your honours? long live you and your wives, say I!—would any of your honours have rowed alongside as if you had been going aboard a royal yacht?—No, you wouldn't; for the gilt epaulets on your shoulders can't alter the heart that swells beneath! you would have done as I did; and what did I? Why I cut him down like old junk—had he been the first lord of the Admiralty, I had done it.

[*Overcome by emotion.*

Adm. Prisoner, we keenly feel for your situation; yet you, as a good sailor, must know that the course of justice cannot be evaded.

Wil. Your honours, let me be no bar to it. I do not talk for my life. Death! why if I 'scaped it here—the next cap-full of wind might blow me from the yard-arm. All I would strive for is, to show that I had no malice; all I wish, whilst you pass sentence, is your pity. That your honours, whilst it is your duty to condemn the sailor, may, as having wives you honour and children you love, respect the husband.

Adm. Have you anything further to advance?

Wil. All my cable is run out—I'm brought to.

Adm. (*having glanced at* Captains, *who, after a pause, signify*

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that their verdict remains unchanged.) Prisoner!—your case falls under the twenty-second article of war. (*Reads.*) "If any man in or belonging to his Majesty's fleet shall draw, or offer to draw, or lift up his hand against his superior officer, he shall suffer death!" (*Putting on his hat.*) The sentence of the court is, that you be hanged at the fore yard-arm of this his Majesty's ship, at the hour of ten o'clock: Heaven pardon your sins, and have mercy on your soul! This court is now dissolved.

[*Music.*—Admiral *and* Captains *come forward*—Admiral *shakes hands with* WILLIAM, *who, after a momentary struggle, collects himself, and is escorted from the cabin in the same way as he entered it.*

SCENE III.—*A Street in Deal.*

Enter GNATBRAIN *and* JACOB TWIG.

Jacob. But, is it true, Gnatbrain?—Is Master Doggrass really drowned?

Gnat. True! I tell you I saw the old piece of wickedness go down.

Jacob. Tell me all—tell me.

Gnat. Why, the old villain was hovering, whilst the court-martial was going on, like a raven about the vessel. The whole sea was covered with boats—there was scarcely room enough to put out an oar. Well, the word was given that the sentence was about to be passed, when old Doggrass, as he would have snuffed up the words of death, as a kite snuffs carrion, sprang hastily up in the boat—she gave a lurch, threw him backward, he went down—not a hand was out to catch him; he went down with the horror of the good, and the laughter of the wicked, weighing on his drowning head.

Jacob. Then he is really lost?

Gnat. Ay, no matter for that:—poor William is lost too.

Jacob. Is there no hope of mercy?—will not his judges have compassion?

Gnat. Yes: but not that compassion which will save him. Why, I'm told that every captain there, the good old admiral himself,—men who had looked upon shipwreck, wounds, and death, with dry eyes, cried when the business was over, like soft-hearted girls. He is to be——he's to die to-morrow.

Jacob. To-morrow!

Gnat. Yes, and the day is now closing in. I must away to poor Susan. That Captain Crosstree, I wouldn't wear his epaulets for all his prize-money.

Jacob. The captain! Why they tell me he's gone raving mad

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ever since he heard of the court-martial:—that he curses himself, calls William his brother, and prays for him. I wish our squire could but look upon the captain as he lies, shrieking and foaming, it would cure him of pride for the rest of his life.

Gnat. Farewell, Jacob, I must on my melancholy errand.

Jacob. Honest Gnatbrain, I was near being a little bit of a rogue—thank heaven that's over; still, I am afraid I angered Susan's husband when he first came on shore. I don't know how it is, yet if he would let me press his five fingers before to-morrow, I—I don't know, but I feel that it would make me more comfortable. He won't refuse it, think ye?

Gnat. Refuse it! no—all William's life has been goodness, and think you he would forget it at the end?—Come, boy, brace up your heart, for you are about to see a sight enough to banish smiles for ever from your face, and turn the young hair grey. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*The Gun-room of the Ship*—Sentry *at the door—tiller working over head—screen canvas berths at the side—tomahawks crossed, and fire-buckets in a row*—WILLIAM *is seated, double-ironed, on a spare tiller*—Lieutenant, Officer of Marines, *and* Master-at-Arms *in attendance.*—WILLIAM'S *chest is opened before him—the* Lieutenant *motions to* Master-at-Arms *to release the prisoner.*—QUID, SEAWEED, *and others discovered.*

Lieu. Now, William.

Wil. (*with emotion.*) Bless you, your honour.

Lieu. Come, summon all your firmness.

Wil. I will, your honour; but just then I couldn't help thinking that when I used to keep the middle-watch with you, I never thought it would come to this.

Lieu. But you are a brave fellow, William, and fear not death?

Wil. Death! No—since I first trod the king's oak, he has been about me—I have slept near him, watched near him—he has looked upon my face, and saw I shrunk not—in the storm I have heeded him not, in the fury of the battle I've thought not of him—Had I been mowed down by ball or cutlass, my shipmates, as they had thrown me to the sharks, would have given me a parting look of friendship, and over their grog have said I did my duty.—This, your honour, would not have been death, but laying-up in ordinary;—but to be swayed up like a wet jib, to dry—the whole fleet—nay, the folks of Deal, people that knew me, used to pat me on the head when a boy,—all these looking at me—Oh! thank heaven, my mother's dead.

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Lieu. Come, William; think no more after that fashion. Here is your chest—perhaps there are some of your shipmates on whom you would bestow something?

Wil. Thank ye, your honour. Lieutenant, I know you won't despise the gift because it comes from one who walked the forecastle—here's my box; keep it for poor Will's sake.—You and I, your honour, have laid yard-arm and yard-arm with many a foe—let us hope we shall come gunwale to gunwale in another climate. (*Gives him box.*) Your honour's hand. (*To* Marine Officer) Blue-peter's flying—the vessel of life has her anchor a-trip, and must soon get under-weigh for the ocean of eternity: your honour will have to march me to the launching-place,—you won't give a ship a bad name because she went awkwardly off the stocks?—Take this, your honour. (*Opens watch.*) This paper was cut by Susan's fingers before we left the Downs;—take it, your honour, I can't look at it. Master Quid, take this for my sake. (*Gives chain and seals, among which is a bullet.*) You see that bullet; preserve it more than the gold: that ball was received by Harry Trunnion in my defence.—I was disarmed, and the Frenchman was about to fire, when Harry threw himself before me, and received that bullet in his breast.—I took it, flattened from his dead body:—have worn it about me:—it has served to remind me that Harry suffered for my sake, and that it was my duty, when chance might serve, to do the like for another.

[*Music.*—WILLIAM *is overcome by his feelings, and hurriedly distributes the contents of his chest among the rest of his* Shipmates.

Lieu. And now, William, have you any request to make?

Wil. None, your honour. Susan and some friends will shortly be on board:—all I want is, that I may have strength to see my wife, my poor young heart-broken wife, for the last time! and then, die like a seaman and a man.—(*Music—Exeunt all but* WILLIAM.) I am soon to see poor Susan! I should like first to beat all my feelings to quarters, that they might stand well to their guns, in this their last engagement.—I'll try and sing that song, which I have many a time sung in the middle watch:—that song which has often placed my heart, though a thousand miles at sea, at my once happy home.

WILLIAM *sings.*

All in the Downs the fleet was moor'd,
The streamers waving in the wind,
When Black-ey'd Su——

(*Overcome.*) My heart is splitting—

[SUSAN *shrieks without—rushes in, and throws herself into* WILLIAM'S *arms.*

Wil. Susan!

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Susan. Oh, William! and have I watched, prayed for your return—smiled in the face of poverty, stopped my ears to the reproaches of the selfish, the worse pity of the thoughtless—and all, all for this?

Wil. Ay, Sue, it's hard; but that's all over — to grieve is useless. Susan, I might have died disgraced—have left you the widow of a bad, black-hearted man: I know 'twill not be so—and in this, whilst you remain behind me, there is some comfort. I died in a good cause; I died in defence of the virtue of a wife; her tears will fall like spring rain on the grass that covers me.

Susan. Talk not so—your grave! I feel it is a place where my heart must throw down its heavy load of life.

Wil. Come, Susan; shake off your tears. There, now, smile a bit—we'll not talk again of graves. Think, Susan, that I am going on a long foreign station—think so. Now, what would you ask—have you nothing, nothing to say?

Susan. Nothing! Oh, when at home, hoping, trembling for this meeting,—thoughts crowded on me, and I felt as I could have talked to you for days,—stopping for want of power, not words. Now the terrible time is come, now I am almost tongue-tied—my heart swells to my throat—I can but look and weep.—(*Gun is fired.*) That gun! oh William! husband! is it so near?—You speak not—tremble!

Wil. Susan, be calm. If you love your husband, do not send him on the deck a white-faced coward. Be still, my poor girl; I have something to say—until you are calm, I will not utter it; now, Susan.——

Susan. I am cold, and motionless as ice.

Wil. Susan,—you know the old aspen that grows near to the church porch;—you and I, when children, almost before we could speak plainly, have sat and watched, and wondered at its shaking leaves.—I grew up, and that tree seemed to me a friend that loved me. Beneath its boughs our little arms were locked together—beneath its boughs, I took the last kiss of your white lip when hard fortune made me turn sailor. I cut from the tree this little branch (*produces it*); many a summer's day aboard, I've lain in the top and looked at these few leaves, until I saw green meadows in the salt sea, and heard the bleating of the sheep. When I am dead, Susan, let me be laid under that tree—let me—

[*Gun is fired*—SUSAN *falls—at this moment, a voice without cries* "A body overboard!" PETER *and* Sailors *come in, with* Master-at-arms *and* Marine Officer.—*Music.*—WILLIAM *gives* SUSAN *into charge of* Sailors, *and she is borne off.*

Wil. What cry was that?—a shipmate overboard!

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Peter. No, William—but as the gun was fired, a body rose up just at the port-hole; they have taken it aboard; it is the body of Susan's uncle—a packet, directed to the captain, was taken from it.

Wil. What, Susan's uncle! villain, may the greatest—(*bell tolls*)—no, no—I shall soon be like him; why should the dying triumph over the dead? [*Music.—Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*The Forecastle of the Ship.—Procession along the starboard gangway; minute bell tolls.*—Master-at-Arms *with a drawn sword under his arm, point next to the prisoner;* WILLIAM *follows without his neckcloth and jacket, a* Marine *on each side;* Officer of Marines *next;* Admiral, Captain, Lieutenant, *and* Midshipmen *following.* WILLIAM *kneels; and all aboard appear to join in prayer with him. The Procession then marches on, and halts at the gangway;* Marine Officer *delivers up prisoner to the* Master-at-Arms *and* Boatswain; *a* Sailor *standing at one of the forecastle guns, with the lock-string in his hand.—A platform extends from the cat-head to the fore-rigging. Yellow flag flying at the fore. Colours half-mast down.—Music* —WILLIAM *embraces the Union Jack—shakes the* Admiral's *hand.*

Wil. Bless you! bless you all—(*mounts the platform.*)

CAPTAIN CROSSTREE *rushes in.*

Cross. Hold! hold!

Adm. Captain Crosstree!—retire, sir, retire.

Cross. Never! If the prisoner be executed, he is a murdered man. I alone am the culprit—'twas I who would have dishonoured him.

Adm. This cannot plead here—he struck a superior officer.

Cross. No!

All. No?

Cross. He saved my life; I had written for his discharge—villainy suppressed the document—'tis here, dated back: when William struck me he was not the king's sailor—I was not his officer.

Adm. (*Having taken the paper.*) He is free!

[*The* Seamen *give three cheers,* WILLIAM *leaps from the platform.* SUSAN *is handed on by* CROSSTREE, *followed by* GNATBRAIN, TWIG, &c.

END OF "BLACK-EY'D SUSAN."

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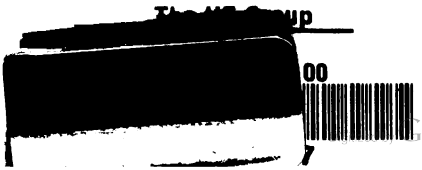

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